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THE LIFE

OF

REV. RICHARD WATSON,

AUTHOR OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES, DICTIONARY,
EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPELS, ETC.

BY STEPHEN B. WICKENS.

“He was a good man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;
an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures; a scribe well
instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

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P R E F A C E .

AMONG the many eminent “ministers of the New Testament,” whose lives have adorned, and whose writings have edified, the Christian church, in the present age, few have been more distinguished than the subject of this memoir.

The Life of Mr. Watson, as written by the Rev. Thomas Jackson, is one of the most interesting and instructive books of the kind ; but its size and price are serious objections to those persons who want either the money to purchase, or the time to read, large books. For the benefit of such individuals, and especially the teachers and elder scholars of our sabbath schools, the following sketch of Mr. Watson’s life has been prepared. It will be found to embrace not only all the prominent incidents related in Mr. Jackson’s larger work, from which it has been chiefly com-

piled, but also several interesting particulars obtained from other sources; especially from Dr. Bunting's "Memorial of the late Rev. Richard Watson;" Dr. Alder's Funeral Sermon; "Recollections of Rev. Richard Watson," by Rev. R. Newstead; and the London Methodist Magazines for several years.

The perusal of this volume will, it is hoped, under the divine blessing, be instrumental in inducing not merely an admiration of the great and good man to whom it relates, but also, on the part of many, a determination to imitate his example, and "be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ."

S. B. W.

New-York, Sept. 24, 1841.

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THE LIFE
OF
REV. RICHARD WATSON.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Watson's birth—Precarious state of his health—His early education—Quickness at learning—Character of his father—Death of one of his sisters—Fraternal conduct—Removal to Lincoln—His education there—His passion for reading—Ingenious artifice—He leaves school and is apprenticed to a carpenter—His personal appearance—Melancholy change in his character—Associates with the persecutors of God's people—Circumstance which led to his conversion—His fervent piety—Diligence in improving his time—Singular accidents—Begins to speak in public—Sudden death of his grandmother—Preaches his first sermon when only fifteen years old.

RICHARD WATSON was born at Barton-upon-Humber, in Lincolnshire, England, on the 22d February, 1781. He was the seventh of a family of eighteen children, all of whom died at a very early age, except Richard, and three sisters who survived him.

During his infancy Richard's health was so exceedingly delicate that his death was almost daily expected; and his parents, who were passionately fond of him, had scarcely the slightest hope that he would be spared to arrive

at manhood. He was so extremely weak that his mother was for a long time compelled to nurse him on a pillow ; his feeble frame not being able to bear the slight pressure of its own weight upon her arm.

When about three or four years old he was very subject to fits of drowsiness. If his mother permitted him to leave the house for the purpose of play, a messenger generally arrived in a short time, informing her that Richard was lying fast asleep on the threshold of some neighbouring house. This drowsiness, however, was only temporary, and was succeeded by unusual playfulness and vivacity. At a proper age he was, according to the custom of those days, placed under the tuition of a good old dame who kept a school within a few doors of his father's house. The earnest and vehement manner in which he repeated the letters, when learning the alphabet, and beginning to form syllables, completely won the admiration of the old lady, who often exclaimed, " Bless thee ! thou wilt be a great man !" a prediction which was amply verified, although the attainments of the pupil at that time could not be regarded as any proof of future eminence.

Having acquired the rudiments of education from his female teacher, Richard, when about

six years of age, was sent to a school kept by the Rev. Mr. Barnett, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, under whose efficient tuition he remained about two years. During the first quarter, his tutor, perceiving his aptness for learning, proposed that he should commence the study of Latin. With this suggestion his parents readily complied, although they had not previously designed giving their son any further education than was necessary to qualify him for some ordinary business. A higher Power, however, designed him for a more important employment, and one in which his extensive and permanent usefulness was greatly promoted by the sound classical training he received in early life. He was at this time distinguished for his quickness in learning, so that he could freely indulge himself in play, which, considering the peculiar delicacy of his constitution, was necessary to his health, and yet he always prepared when the time arrived for repeating his lesson. His mother often reminded him of the length and difficulty of his tasks, and the consequent necessity for application; but his general reply was, "I can say my lesson." Still fearing that he was not sufficiently diligent in his studies, she made inquiries of his tutor, who told her that she might

dismiss all anxiety on that subject, as the improvement of her son was to him perfectly satisfactory.

Mr. Watson, sen., at this period generally attended the ministry of the Calvinistic dissenters. He was a pious, upright man; one who feared God, and loved the ordinances of his house. He maintained a strict discipline in his family. His children were trained up in a regular attendance upon the public worship of God; were restrained from evil company, and from sabbath breaking; and were regularly instructed in the Assembly's catechism. His parental care and anxiety were not in vain. Though often called to follow his infant offspring to the grave, in one of them, at least, he was favoured with a signal display of divine grace. He had a daughter who was a very remarkable example of early piety. She was a year or two older than her brother Richard; and they were tenderly attached to each other. They were accustomed to sing hymns together; and when they were left alone in the dark, she often told him that they need not be afraid, for that good angels, who sing hymns to God continually, would always take care of them. She had strong presentiments of an early death, and frequently told the family that she should

soon die, and go to heaven. Once, when the shoemaker brought her a pair of new shoes, instead of being elated, as is generally the case with children of her age, she told him that he might take them back again, for she should not live to wear them. Her anticipations of an early death were realized. She died of the small pox, when her brother Richard was about four years old; and he was thus deprived of his favourite companion.

Richard's mental improvement kept pace with his age. When he was not more than six years old, he read, with intense interest, sixteen or eighteen volumes of the "Universal History," which his father had purchased for him. He also practiced himself in drawing, in which he took great delight, and manifested more than ordinary taste. When he wanted a fresh supply of brushes and colours, he generally made application to his mother, whom he found, as other children have done under similar circumstances, somewhat more accessible on such subjects than his father. It was his practice to repeat his Latin grammar to his eldest sister, till at length she became nearly as well acquainted with it as himself. At one time, being both confined to the house by sickness, they committed nearly the whole of Fene-

lon's Telemachus to memory. This sister still speaks of his fraternal spirit and conduct in those times, and in subsequent life, with delight and affection. If any misunderstanding ever arose between them, it was generally terminated by repeating two verses of one of Dr. Watts's hymns for children, with which their minds were familiar:—

“Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For God hath made them so ;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature too.

But, children, you should never let
Such angry passions rise ;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes.”

When Richard was about eight years old, the family removed from Barton to Lincoln, where his father, who was a saddler, carried on business for several years. On their arrival in that city, Richard was sent to a private seminary, kept by a person by the name of Hescott, till his parents should be able to procure his admission into the free grammar school. At this school he does not appear to have been distinguished either for his application or his proficiency. His handwriting was not good, and, indeed, he was never ambitious to excel

in that useful art. He made amends, however, in some degree, by the superiority of his reading. In this he was proposed as an example to the whole school; and it became a common remark among the boys,—“ Dick Watson will make a capital parson, he is such a good reader.”

After remaining at Mr. Hescott's seminary about two years, Richard was removed to the grammar school at Lincoln, where his progress in learning was highly satisfactory to his tutors. He read Cesar, Virgil, Horace, and some of the orations and epistles of Cicero, with Homer and Xenophon. This course of study, which was pursued without any specific object in view, afterward proved to be of incalculable advantage to him.

In connection with his classical studies, he cherished a taste for general literature and knowledge. His father purchased for him a history of England, in four folio volumes, which he read with great avidity. So fixed was his attention, that when he sat, as he frequently did, with one of these volumes on his knee, he appeared to suffer no interruption from the conversation and bustle of the family. Finding the leisure which he could command during the day insufficient to satisfy his thirst for informa-

tion, he requested permission to sit up all night to peruse his favourite work. This request was, of course, denied by his parents, for reasons which he was then unable to appreciate; and he was, in consequence, greatly disappointed. At last he devised the following expedient to secure his purpose. He concealed the iron bar which fastened the shutters of the store; and when at night this necessary article of security was wanting, he affected to sympathize with the family in the loss they had sustained, and suggesting that it would be unsafe to leave the property in the store exposed to depredation, he recommended that they should retire to sleep, and he would sit up all night to prevent the intrusion of thieves. The fraud was not discovered till some time afterward. This ingenious artifice shows his passion for reading, but is not to be commended. Deception, under any circumstances, is highly reprehensible, and especially so when practised by children upon their parents.

On his removal to Lincoln, Mr. Watson, sen., had at first attended the chapel belonging to Lady Huntingdon's connection, but he afterward united himself with the Methodists. His family were accustomed to accompany him to the chapels of these denominations; but it does

not appear that his son gave any indications of piety at this period of his life. He was diligent in his studies, fond of play, full of animation, possessed a ready wit, and gave striking proofs of a strong and determined mind ; but the solemn truths of religion seem to have neither engaged his attention, nor affected his heart.

As his parents had not the means to educate him for a learned profession, it became necessary, when he arrived at the age of fourteen years, that he should be taught some business as a means of honourable subsistence. Preferring, as more manly and becoming, the active and laborious employment of a mechanic, to the comparatively indolent life of a storekeeper, he was, at his own desire, apprenticed for the term of seven years to Mr. Wm. Bescoby, a carpenter and joiner, whose workshop was not far distant from his father's house ; and, as his health was delicate, it was arranged that he should reside with his parents.

At this time his appearance was very singular. Though only fourteen years of age, he had attained his full stature, which was six feet two inches ; his hair was lank, and of a deep black ; his countenance was that of a mere boy, and his manners were unformed.

His extraordinary height was the more remarkable, as both his parents were considerably below the middle stature.

After the commencement of his apprenticeship, his general spirit and conduct underwent a change for the worse. He became less studious and thoughtful, and entertained an unbounded love of mischief. Near his father's house there lived a Methodist shoemaker; a man in very humble circumstances, but distinguished for his deep piety and active zeal. This poor man having once punished Richard in the chapel for indecorous behaviour, became an object of almost constant jest with the thoughtless youth. A habit of treating religious persons with ridicule, generally prepares the way for greater evils; and the contempt shown for the shoemaker was but the prelude to acts of direct hostility to the pious associates of that good man. The only road leading to the Methodist chapel in Lincoln lay by the side of the canal; and for several years a number of wicked men and boys were accustomed, especially in the winter evenings, to assemble on the opposite side of the canal, for the purpose of insulting and annoying the congregation as they passed to and fro from their place of worship. Richard was, doubtless, by his love of sport, rather than

by any feeling of hostility to religion, unhappily led to connect himself with the persons who were concerned in these practices. Disregarding the example and authority of his parents, he took his stand on the side of the canal opposite to that on which the chapel stood, and joined with the profane rabble in pelting the worshippers of God with whom his father was united in Christian fellowship. Sometimes he also went to the chapel to disturb the congregation and the preacher during the time of divine service. His father was pained to see such a want of pious feeling in one so young, and who had been religiously educated; but the heart was "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," and for a time remonstrance was unavailing. The misguided youth had no idea of happiness, except in levity and frolic, and in the company of persons of similar tastes and pursuits. Considering the manner in which he began, thus early in life, to neglect the house of God, profane the sabbath, associate with evil company, and to ridicule sacred things, the anticipations of his friends respecting his future character and habits were very discouraging. His own opinion was, that had he not at this time been arrested by an unseen hand, he would have become one of the most wicked among

his comrades. His native energy of mind would not allow him to rest in mediocrity. He must be eminent either in good or evil; and now, having entered upon a downward course, the fearful probability was, that he would pursue it to his ruin.

But "God, who is rich in mercy," and hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, caused a somewhat singular incident to be the means of converting the ungodly youth from "the error of his way." There lived in Lincoln, at that time, an intelligent watchmaker, who was no relative of Richard, though he bore the same name. Richard frequently visited the house of this man, both for the pleasure of his conversation, and for his assistance in the mathematical studies in which he was then engaged. The watchmaker's wife was a professor of religion, and a zealous Calvinist. The family of the Watsons having at that time forsaken the Calvinistic ministry, and attached themselves to the Methodists, the good woman, who was fond of disputation, was exceedingly desirous to convince Richard how grievously they had erred in so doing. Richard, who came to the house for scientific purposes merely, was greatly annoyed by her lengthened speeches on questions which he did not understand, and

in which he felt little interest ; and at the same time his vanity was mortified when she pressed him with arguments which he was unable to answer. He had for some time absented himself from the Methodist chapel, but he now determined to attend there a few times, hoping to hear something that would enable him to silence his opponent. Such was the motive which induced him again to resort to the house of God ; but the first sermon that he heard after his return, convinced him that there were subjects of greater importance than those on which he had come to seek information.* The word came with power to his heart ; his numerous and aggravated sins were brought to his remembrance, and he saw that he was guilty in the sight of God, and exposed to the curse of the divine law. His chief concern now was, not how he might silence the eager controversialist who had puzzled him, but how he might escape the wrath of an offended God, which

* The preacher on this occasion was the Rev. George Sargent, a pious and devoted minister, who, after having served the church for many years, was, in 1823, killed by the overturning of a coach, while on his way to the conference. The same accident also proved fatal to another preacher, the Rev. Edward B. Lloyd, who was travelling with him.

hung over his head, and seemed ready to break forth upon him. In this state of mind, "sorrowing after a godly sort," he accompanied some pious people to a neighbouring village to hear a sermon by the Rev. William Dodwell, an evangelical clergyman of the Episcopal Church. Here his convictions were deepened; and his grief occasioned by the remembrance of his rebellion against God was rendered more acute and painful. He was alarmed for the consequences of his wickedness; the burden of his guilt pressed heavily upon him; and under a sense of his perilous condition he was led to cry from his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

He did not long continue in this distressing state. He was surrounded by friends who had passed through the same painful process to the joys of pardon and purity of heart. These rejoiced to see the prodigal return from his wanderings; they sympathized in the sorrows of the weeping penitent; they directed his attention to the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the world; and earnestly and affectionately exhorted him to believe, with the heart unto righteousness, in his crucified Redeemer. He did so, and was soon "filled with joy and peace in believing." His darkness was turned

into the light of day ; guilty fear gave place to filial love ; the Holy Spirit bore witness with his spirit that he was a child of God ; he loved God under a deep and abiding assurance of God's love to him ; and he loved all mankind for the Lord's sake. He could now adopt, in all its fulness, the following language of one of our hymns :—

“ Long my imprison'd spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night :
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray ;
I woke ; the dungeon flamed with light ;
My chains fell off, my heart was free ;
I rose, went forth, and follow'd Thee.”

It has been justly observed by a modern writer, that a change like this can never be forgotten ; that a man might as well attempt to forget a hairbreadth escape from shipwreck, as to forget the period when, in the Scriptural sense of the expression, he “ passed from death unto life.” To the end of his days, Mr. Watson retained a vivid recollection of the feelings and occurrences connected with this period of his history. When conversing with his friends he often spoke of the insensibility of his heart previous to his conversion, and of the spiritual enjoyments which succeeded that event. On one occasion, after a lapse of thirty years, he

paid a visit to the place of his spiritual birth, and attended a love-feast which, amidst the delightful exercises of a missionary anniversary, was held by the members of the Methodist society in Lincoln and its neighbourhood. With deep emotion, the tears gushing from his eyes, he related the particulars of his early life, especially his wickedness in connecting himself with the persecutors of God's people ; the penitent distress which he experienced when convinced of sin ; and the state of light and liberty into which he was brought when the burden of his guilt was removed, and he was enabled to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

The effects of regenerating grace were strikingly displayed in the subsequent spirit and conduct of this remarkable youth. Every thing in his behaviour evinced the greatness as well as the reality of the change he had experienced. He immediately forsook his ungodly companions, and became a willing and happy member of the Methodist society at Lincoln, meekly submitting to all the contumely and insult with which they were then treated in that city. His passion for folly and mischief was entirely subdued ; his spirit was serious, cheerful, and devout ; his attention to business was sedulous and exemplary ; and his whole deportment was

so circumspect and commendable, that religious parents were accustomed to hold him up as an example to their children ; and in some instances young people were so struck with the change which they saw in him, as to be deeply impressed with the reality and power of religion. His conversion excited the resentment of the persecutors of the Methodists, who became more outrageous than ever ; and the congregations were subjected to every species of annoyance, both in the chapel and on their way to it. One evening a number of men, dressed in a ludicrous manner, came to the chapel with a fiddle, to disturb the worshippers of God. With this impious adventure, Richard would a few months before have been highly delighted ; but now he viewed it with different feelings. On his return home he related to his mother what had occurred, at the same time weeping, because of the dishonour done to God by the profane interruption of his worship, and the folly and wickedness of the men who were thus insensible to every obligation of decency and religion.

After his conversion he was remarkably diligent in improving his time. In the day he cheerfully attended to the labours of his calling, but his evenings were devoted to the wor-

ship of God, and the acquisition of useful knowledge. He spent much time in secret prayer, wrestling with God for spiritual blessings, and for the prosperity and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. He was also constant in his attendance on the public prayer meetings, where he soon began to take a part in the public addresses to the throne of grace. This provoked, in a high degree, the ridicule of his former companions ; but he steadily held on his way, and suffered nothing to divert him from his purpose of serving God, and him alone.

The prayer meetings at the chapel often began about the time that his labours in the shop were ended, so that considerable haste was necessary to enable him to be at the house of God when the service commenced. It is a remarkable fact, that twice, when running to the chapel, in his eagerness to join his Christian friends in divine worship, he fell, and broke his arm. On these occasions his zeal received a temporary check ; and instead of pursuing his way to the "place where prayer was wont to be made," he sorrowfully returned home to relate to his parents the disaster which had befallen him.

Mr. Watson's talent for usefulness soon became apparent. Although at the time of his

conversion a mere boy, it was not long before he began to give "a word of exhortation" in prayer meetings. His first public address was occasioned by the death of his maternal grandmother, who resided at that time in his father's house. She was upward of eighty years old, and appears to have been a woman of very devout spirit. She regularly attended public worship at her parish church on the sabbath; and almost every day in the week she was present at the religious services in the cathedral, notwithstanding that edifice was nearly a mile from her home, and stood on the summit of a steep and lofty hill, which it was necessary for her to ascend. Although not a member of the Methodist society, she frequently attended their chapel, and joined with them in worshipping God, and listening to "the word of his grace." To this venerable and pious relative, Richard was tenderly attached. One day, when he was at the shop, she said to her granddaughter, "Ann, my dear, get the prayer book, and read to me the whole of the burial service. I should like to hear it." Her request was complied with, notwithstanding its singularity. She then said, "I very much wish to see Richard. Will any of you ask him to come home?" He was sent for; but the answer was, that he could not

be spared from his work. He added, however, that he would see his grandmother in the evening when his work was done. In the meantime she said to her daughter, "I am very sleepy." Her daughter replied, "I will fetch you a pillow, mother, and you shall lean your head on the table while you sit in your chair." The pillow was brought; she reclined her head upon it, closed her eyes, and instantly expired, without the slightest indication of pain.

When Richard came home, and found that his grandmother had thus suddenly and unexpectedly departed this life, he was greatly affected. In the evening he attended the prayer meeting, and, under the impulse of his feelings, addressed the congregation on the solemn event which had just occurred in his father's house. This was on the 10th of February, 1796, so that Richard was not yet fifteen years old when he began to "call sinners to repentance." On the twenty-third of the same month, being the day after he had completed his fifteenth year, he preached his first sermon in a cottage at Boothby, a small village near Lincoln, an instance of precocity almost unexampled. Such was the commencement of Richard Watson's public ministry, the future character of which

neither he nor his humble auditors at that time anticipated.

The employment of persons so young in the public service of the church, is, in ordinary instances, highly injudicious. But the case of Mr. Watson was peculiar. He possessed a strength and sobriety of judgment, of which, at that period of life, there have been few examples ; while the depth and solidity of his piety would have done honour to hoary hairs. The cordiality with which he was received by the most pious and intelligent of his hearers, and the success which attended his labours, proved that he had not mistaken his calling. His mental growth had been as rapid as that of his corporeal frame ; and he was a man, both in understanding and in stature, at an age when people in general are mere children.

CHAPTER II.

State of religion in the villages near Lincoln—Mr. Watson labours as a local preacher—Opposition—Interest excited by his preaching—Visit to Newark—Released from his apprenticeship—Sent to supply the place of a preacher in the Newark circuit—His feelings on arriving there—Received on trial as a travelling preacher, and appointed to Ashby-de-la-Zouch—His character and usefulness—Labours beyond his strength—Appointed to Castle-Donington circuit—Preaches against the doctrine of universal restoration—Visit to Leicester—Appointed to labour there—Mr. Edmondson's account of his character, studies, and ministry—Removal to Derby—Success of his preaching.

MR. WATSON, having begun to preach, was impelled onward by a conviction of duty, and an ardent desire for the salvation of souls. The moral state of the villages near Lincoln was, at that time, such as to awaken the sympathies, and call forth the most strenuous exertions of the friends of Jesus. There was among the people not only a lamentable ignorance of the spirituality and power of religion, but also a general indifference to its forms; and at the same time they violently opposed every effort to bring about a reformation. In what is now the Lincoln circuit, the Methodists had then no chapel except the one in the city; and there were only about six local preachers. These pious men, after devoting six days of the week to the labours of their calling, spent the sabbath in visiting the neighbouring villages, and call-

ling men to repentance. They had no regular plan of operation, but each man went where he thought his labours were most needed. In many of these villages, having no houses to preach in, they stood in the open air, and proclaimed their message to as many as could be persuaded to listen. In this work, which required a fortitude which no personal danger could daunt, and a spirit of endurance which no provocation or insult could overcome, Mr. Watson now took his part; and young as he was, both in years and religion, he was admirably qualified for it. His zeal was great, and his addresses were distinguished by their earnestness and even by their vehemence. He frequently met with the most rude and offensive treatment; and his mother states, that when he returned home his clothes often bore sad marks of the violence with which he had been assailed. In one village which he visited, his uncle, a respectable farmer, resided; and there he was attacked with rotten eggs, and other missiles; while his relative, so far from protecting him, encouraged the mob, and said, "Pelt him well, lads; my nephew can *stand fire*."

In these labours the pious shoemaker before mentioned was generally his faithful associate. He used to stand by his young friend in the midst of mobs, and strive to protect him from interrup-

tion and injury.* Mr. Jackson says, he can testify, from personal knowledge, that, in a comparatively short space of time, incalculable good was effected by the blessing of God upon the disinterested labours of Richard Watson and his coadjutors.

It was impossible that a person so young, so deeply pious, and so gifted, should continue to preach without exciting general attention. He sometimes occupied the pulpit of the Methodist chapel in Lincoln, to the astonishment of the congregation, and especially of those who were acquainted with his former levity and folly. Reports concerning the character and success of his preaching spread into districts where he was personally unknown; and many were induced to say, "I would hear the young man

* "For many years the shoemaker here referred to was a very zealous and useful member of the Methodist society in Lincoln, and afforded valuable assistance in extending the work of God in the neighbourhood; but his latter end, unhappily, was not worthy of his previous life. Surrounded by a large family, he extended his business beyond his pecuniary means, and involved himself in difficulties, under the pressure of which his moral principles were overcome, and his sun set behind a cloud. His name is therefore withheld; and his case is recorded as a warning to others. 'He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.' "

myself." Among other places, he was requested to visit Newark, and to preach in the Methodist chapel. With this request he complied; but when he ascended the pulpit his boyish aspect excited painful alarm in many who came to hear, and who could scarcely believe that it was possible for one so young to preach extempore. Their alarm was increased when he read for his text John iv, 24, "*God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,*" thinking that the words presented difficulties which he was not prepared to encounter. As he proceeded in his discourse, however, and they heard from his lips some of the most important truths of revelation, delivered with a hallowed seriousness and fervour, and with a correctness of sentiment and expression that would have done honour to an aged divine, their apprehensions entirely subsided, and they listened to his message with mingled feelings of admiration and delight. This visit to Newark led to important results. It was a link in that golden chain of Providence, by which he was ultimately drawn from secular pursuits, and "separated to the gospel of God."

To those of his hearers who were possessed of spiritual discernment, it must have been manifest, even from his first attempts at

preaching, that Mr. Watson was providentially designed for the work of the ministry. His employment as a mechanic afforded no adequate scope for the exercise of his mental powers ; and his mind was constantly occupied in the study of the Scriptures, in the preparation of sermons, and in plans of usefulness to the souls of men. His attention was drawn to these subjects by an influence which he knew not how to resist ; and his highest enjoyment was found in preaching to others those holy doctrines whose truth and power he had himself realized. Serious impediments, however, seemed to stand in his path. Five years of his apprenticeship were yet unexpired ; and if he should employ the whole of this time in manual labour, the cultivation of his mind must continue in a great degree neglected, and his means of usefulness in future life be proportionably diminished. Under these circumstances he meekly pursued his course of duty, leaving himself entirely in the hands of God, and taking no anxious thought for the morrow. At length his way was opened in a manner which he could never have anticipated. His employer was not wealthy, nor did he make a strict profession of religion. The services of his apprentice had become valuable, and were

likely to be still more so through a series of years. Yet seeing that his gain would be a permanent loss to the young man, he generously gave up the indenture by which Richard was bound to him, and advised that he should be sent to a relative in London, a cabinet-maker, where he would have an opportunity of turning his ingenuity to better account than if he continued with him to the end of his apprenticeship. Richard was thus at liberty to act as God in his providence might direct. On the part of Mr. Bescoby the liberation of his apprentice was altogether a voluntary act; and he seems to have had no object in view but the temporal advantage of the youth, whose character he admired, and in whose welfare he felt a friendly concern.

When Mr. Watson had thus obtained his liberty, his father proposed that he should repair to London for the purpose which his late employer had suggested. Richard, however, said he did not think he should long confine his attention to business of any kind, as he believed himself to be called of God to the Christian ministry. "If that be the case," replied his father, "it is useless to expend any more time and money in acquiring a knowledge of any trade."

At this juncture the Rev. Thomas Cooper, then stationed in the Newark circuit, lost his health; and it became necessary to engage some person to supply his lack of ministerial service. In this emergency the attention of the people was directed to Mr. Watson, who had preached in Newark with acceptance a short time before. He was accordingly requested to supply Mr. Cooper's place for a time; and as he was disengaged, and had a strong predilection for the ministry, he complied, and repaired to Newark in the spring of 1796.

On his arrival in Newark he went to the house of Mr. Cooper, where he was very kindly received. He had not been long there before he became deeply affected with his situation. He had just left his kind parents for the first time; he was surrounded by strangers, about to enter upon a work of great difficulty, and of fearful responsibility; and he felt that his abilities were unequal to the task which was laid upon him. Under the impression of these views he sighed deeply, and at length, overcome by his feelings, he wept like a child. Mr. Cooper, who knew the heart of a young preacher and a stranger, sympathized with his sorrowing friend. He took him up into his study; conversed with him at considerable

length; encouraged him in the most feeling manner; and united with him in earnest prayer that the Lord would assist him, and bless him in his work.

Mr. Watson entered upon his itinerant labours with fear and trembling. It was a considerable disadvantage to him that he was sent in the place of Mr. Cooper, whose talents as a preacher were of a very popular kind. When he went to one village on the circuit, the family by whom he was entertained could not suppress their feelings of disappointment when they found that the place of their favourite preacher was to be supplied by a stranger, of very boyish appearance, whom they had never previously seen; and they uttered in his presence the most unseemly complaints, in a manner calculated to make a very painful impression upon his mind. He listened in silence to their expressions of regret, and when the time of service arrived, he rose, and, with becoming seriousness, gave out the hymn beginning,—

“How happy is the pilgrim’s lot,
How free from every anxious thought,
From worldly hope and fear;
Confined to neither court nor cell,
His soul disdains on earth to dwell;
He only sojourns here.”

The entire service was conducted with such decorum and impressiveness, and such a heavenly influence attended the sermon, that the congregation were greatly affected; and the persons who had formed an estimate of his abilities from his youthful appearance, finding that they had judged erroneously, expressed their concern for the unkindness of their remarks, and joined with the rest in requesting him to visit them again, even in the place of Mr. Cooper.

To protect themselves from persecution, some of the preachers in this circuit found it necessary to obtain certificates, commonly called licenses, under the "Toleration act," then in force; and Mr. Watson availed himself of the opportunity. This was on the 10th of August, 1796. Some objections were made to him by the magistrates, very naturally, on account of his youth, and boyish appearance; for though very tall, he was exceedingly slender; but one of the bench observed, that "no age was specified for the dissenters," and the usual oaths were reluctantly, and somewhat angrily, administered to the juvenile applicant.

Mr. Watson remained in the Newark circuit as Mr. Cooper's assistant, giving great and general satisfaction, until the conference of 1796;

but he had no expectation that he should then be received into the regular itinerancy, for he was only fifteen years and six months old. He was ready to obey the call of Providence, either by labouring in the word and doctrine, or returning to his secular employ. In the account of his own life, Mr. Cooper says, "When I had been about a year and a half in this circuit I was deeply afflicted, and therefore sent to invite Mr. Watson, of Lincoln, who, though only sixteen years old, was a local preacher, to come and help me. He kindly consented, and continued with me during the remainder of the year. When I arrived at the London conference, I earnestly entreated our brethren to accept Mr. Watson upon trial as a travelling preacher; stating that he had been exceedingly useful while with me; and, though so young, I knew the Lord had called him to the work, and fitted him for it, and I believed he would be an able and useful minister of the gospel: but all my pleadings were in vain; for the senior preachers thought he was too young for the important work. Nevertheless, when I arrived at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in 1796, the circuit appointed for me, I found it quite necessary to have more help; I therefore sent for Mr. Watson again, and he cheerfully came to me,

and continued the whole year, and was very acceptable. At the next conference I met with no reproof for thus acting. Mr. Watson was received with great satisfaction; the year was allowed him; and he went to his second circuit with comfort."

Before he received Mr. Cooper's invitation, Mr. Watson began to make arrangements for working at his own business in Newark. During this interval, the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson preached in that town, on his way from the conference. He gives the following account of Mr. Watson at that time:—"The moment I fixed my eyes upon him in the congregation, I was struck with his singular appearance. He was very tall and thin; his look was serious and dignified; and his countenance indicated great intellectual power. When I left the pulpit, I inquired who he was; the friends told me that he was a youth of sixteen, who was employed in the circuit to assist the travelling preachers."

Mr. Watson's colleagues in his new scene of labour were the Rev. Messrs. Cooper and Burdall, with whom he co-operated in the most faithful and affectionate manner for the furtherance of the work of God. According to the testimony of those who were acquainted with

him at this period, his entire spirit and conduct proved him to be a man of God ; and the talent which he displayed in his ministry excited general surprise.

The following particulars respecting Mr. Watson's labours in the Ashby-de-la-Zouch circuit are taken from an account furnished by Mr. Robert Stenson, a respectable local preacher, who at that time resided there, and was very intimate with him. He says :—" Soon after Mr. Watson came into the circuit, I heard him preach on Heb. iii, 2, 3. He introduced his discourse in a very interesting manner, and with the seriousness of an aged divine. But when he entered upon the discussion of his subject I was truly astonished. From that day to the present, I do not believe that I have ever heard the salvation of the gospel, in its fulness and spirituality, more clearly set forth, or more impressively urged upon the acceptance of perishing sinners, than it was by him on that occasion. During his stay in the circuit, his piety, zeal, and talents, bore him up in the esteem and affections of the people ; and although his colleagues were both of them men of superior abilities as preachers, and had greatly the advantage over him in experience, yet Mr. Watson commanded equal congregations with them.

In the pulpit he was deeply serious. His public addresses to the throne of grace were characterized by great fervour. In preaching he was very faithful, energetic, pointed, and successful. The matter of his sermons was solid and important; and they were remarkable for clearness, fulness, and precision. During the first six or seven months he laboured very hard, even beyond his strength, and was instrumental in the conversion of many souls. His earnest exertions, both in prayer and preaching, were more than his feeble constitution could bear. His health, therefore, failed, and he was obliged to return home, and rest for some months, in order to the recovery of his strength. The loss of his labours was greatly lamented by the congregations; for he was generally beloved by the people. In his intercourse with his friends and the societies, he was more like a man of forty years of age, than a youth of sixteen; exhibiting an admirable mixture of Christian cheerfulness, sobriety, and seriousness. His habits were sociable and friendly, and his company very agreeable. At the same time he was deeply studious, and his thirst for knowledge was unbounded. I knew him well from the time that he was sixteen years of age till he was twenty; and in regard to that period

of his life, among persons of the same age, I have not found his equal for piety, moral worth, and efficient preaching. In the course of forty years' experience and observation, and intercourse with the church, I have never met with any young man who, in these respects, could, in my estimation, bear a comparison with Richard Watson."

At the conference of 1797 he was appointed to the Castle-Donington circuit, under the superintendence of the Rev. George Sargent, through whose ministry he had been convinced of sin. In this station he conducted himself in an upright and Christian manner, and laboured with his usual fidelity and success. He did not content himself with a general declaration of gospel truth; but directed his preaching against the prevalent errors of the times; especially the doctrine of universal restoration, as taught by Mr. Winchester, who zealously maintained that all lost beings would be finally restored to purity and heaven. This doctrine, which converts hell into a purgatory, contradicts the express testimony of revelation; and by holding out to the unregenerate the assurance of final happiness, even if they should die in their sins, destroys the principal motive to repentance and conversion. Young as he was,

Mr. Watson saw the unscriptural character and pernicious tendency of this popular error, and warned his hearers of the fearful consequences connected with its practical adoption.

During his stay in this circuit he spent a Sunday in Leicester, having exchanged places with one of the preachers there. On this day he preached two sermons on Hebrews xi, 6, "*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" In the first of these discourses he undertook to prove the being and perfections of God, in opposition to that branch of infidel philosophy which denies a first cause, a superintending providence, and a moral government; and in the second he directed the attention of his hearers to the manner in which God is to be sought, and the reward which will crown the exertions of those who seek him according to his word and will. With these sermons the people were highly gratified, and a strong desire was expressed that Mr. Watson might be appointed to labour among them the ensuing year. A request to that effect was forwarded to the conference, and he was accordingly sent to that station, under the superintendence of the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson.

This appointment was to Mr. Watson a pe-

cularly happy one. His lot was cast among an affectionate people, who esteemed and loved him ; and his labours were both acceptable and useful. But the greatest advantage which he derived from it arose from his intercourse with his superintendent. Up to this period Mr. Watson's reading, though extensive, had been too desultory to be of much practical benefit. He was eager to know, and had a mind capable of acquiring knowledge in the most rapid manner, but greatly needed the assistance of some judicious friend to guide him in the selection of books, and to mark out for him some regular and systematic course of study. Such a friend and counsellor he found in Mr. Edmondson, who was himself a great reader, a hard student, and withal a kind-hearted and friendly man. From him Mr. Watson received valuable advice and assistance in the acquisition of different branches of knowledge ; and for the person of this enlightened "guide of his youth" he ever cherished a strong regard.

Respecting this part of Mr. Watson's personal history, Mr. Edmondson has furnished an account, from which we make the following extracts :—

"In the year 1798 Mr. Watson was stationed with me at Leicester. I soon perceived that

he was a youth of very superior parts ; that he had a most surprising grasp of intellect ; and, that, if he held on his way, he would become one of our brightest luminaries. I could not render him all the assistance he should have had at that critical period of his life ; but I did what I could ; and, with a generosity of soul worthy of himself, he always expressed a grateful sense of my poor services.

“ As an inmate of our family, he was social, friendly, and affectionate. He gave no trouble, was well pleased with every thing, and was greatly beloved by all under my roof. We never saw him out of temper. He never put on any lofty airs, but was humble, modest, and unassuming. We never had an angry word, an unkind look, or the slightest interruption of a most delightful friendship ; and when he left us, at the end of the year, we sustained a loss in our domestic circle which we deeply deplored.

“ His studies, before he came to Leicester, had been extremely irregular and desultory ; and he had acquired such a habit of passing rapidly from one thing to another, without going to the bottom of any, that it was difficult for him to fix his thoughts for any length of time upon any given subject. But when he

conquered that habit, he could acquire more information in a few days than some others could in as many months. Perceiving this defect, I strongly urged the necessity of perseverance in all his literary pursuits; and afterward found that my advice had not been disregarded.

“As a reader, he had no taste for common and ordinary works. Standard books, of high reputation, were his favourites; and that circumstance assisted him much, when he became an author, both in regard to the style and sentiments of his valuable publications. His memory was remarkably strong. He told Mrs. Edmondson, that if he read a work once, it was almost all his own; and that if he read it twice, it was his own altogether.

“I gave him a plan of reading and study, adapted to the itinerant life, which I had formed for myself, and which I afterward published in my ‘Essay on the Christian Ministry.’ How far this plan was observed by him, while he continued to travel, I cannot say; but I know it met with his approbation, and that he adopted it while we were stationed together. When we went out into the circuit, our saddle-bags were loaded with books; and when we returned, we generally gave an account of what we had read and studied. Our circuit was not

one of the most extensive ; we were a fortnight out, and a fortnight home. During the fortnight at home we walked thirty or forty miles a week ; and supplied Leicester and six or eight adjacent villages, generally returning home three or four miles after the evening service.

“ While I was in that circuit, I made a resolution to select some important subject of meditation on every journey when I was alone ; or of conversation on every journey when I had company. This I recommended to Mr. Watson, and I have reason to believe he continued to observe it in after life ; for I have heard that he could employ his thoughts on the most profound subjects while walking even in the noisy streets of London.

“ Mr. Watson’s temper was noble and generous, without the slightest mixture of either littleness or meanness. He indulged in the innocent cheerfulness of youth, and occasionally amused his friends with anecdotes of an extraordinary character ; but he was generally grave, solemn, and dignified.

“ When he travelled with me he was much esteemed as a preacher, though not remarkably popular. His sermons were not of that finished character which they assumed in his riper years ; and yet there was in them a strength

of mind, and a grasp of thought, which was admired by all judicious hearers. I heard him occasionally; and was of opinion that his discourses were more remarkable for boldness of thought, and appropriate figures of rhetoric, than for regularity of composition."

While in the Leicester circuit, Mr. Watson's studies were not exclusively directed to divinity, literature, and science. His active mind aspired to an acquaintance with every subject within his reach. In his visits to the different villages, he made minute inquiries into the nature of the various manufactures in which the people were engaged; and at the house where he lodged, he often tried his skill in wool-combing, stocking-weaving, and other employments, as a matter of relaxation from severer pursuits.

At the conference of 1799 Mr. Watson was appointed to Derby, having for his colleagues the Rev. Messrs. Shelmerdine and Seckerson, men whom he ever after esteemed and loved for their piety, intelligence, and Christian affection. On the first Sunday after his arrival he preached in Derby, when two persons are said to have obtained salvation under his ministry. One of these was a blind woman belonging to the work-house; who from that time adorned

her profession, and some years after died in the Lord. He was greatly affected with this instance of the divine goodness, in thus blessing his ministry; and resolved to devote himself afresh to the service of God and his church.

It was during his stay in Derby that Mr. Watson commenced his career as an author. The Rev. J. Hotham, an Episcopal clergyman of that city, had taken great pains to circulate a weak and illiberal pamphlet, entitled, "An Address to the People called Methodists." The design of this "Address" was to destroy public confidence in the Methodist ministers, by representing them as unauthorized teachers, who preached erroneous and enthusiastic doctrines, deprived men of innocent pleasures and gratifications, and subjected them to needless terrors and alarms on the subject of religion. Although the charges and arguments contained in this "Address" had been a hundred times advanced and refuted, yet as it was extensively and gratuitously circulated, and was likely to make an injurious impression upon the minds of those persons who were but little acquainted with the Methodists, it was deemed desirable that the pamphlet should be answered; and accordingly Mr. Watson, at the request of the friends in Derby, published a reply, under

the title of "An Apology for the People called Methodists; in a letter to the Rev. J. Hotham, B. A., Rector of St. Hurburgh's, Derby, in answer to a pamphlet lately circulated among the inhabitants of Derby, entitled, 'An Address to the People called Methodists.' By Richard Watson, Preacher of the Gospel."

In reply to the charge that the Methodist preachers "distressed" the minds of the poor, ignorant, well-meaning people, Mr. Watson remarks,—“We distress the minds of those ‘*well-meaning*’ people, who perhaps may be at the same time drunkards, swearers, liars, sabbath-breakers, &c. We distress these ‘*well-meaning*’ people,” I say, by telling them that they are sinners, and must come to Jesus Christ for salvation, and that if they obstinately refuse, they must all perish. Is not all this Scriptural? And will not *they* have cause to bless God for this ‘distress,’ if it leads them to believe on ‘him who justifieth the ungodly?’ And ought not you, sir, instead of reviling, to say with the apostle, when some of his ‘poor, ignorant, well-meaning’ followers were ‘distressed,’ ‘Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance?’ 2 Cor. vii, 9.”

This first publication of Mr. Watson, which is dated April 4, 1800, though of course vastly

inferior to the eloquent and argumentative productions which in after years proceeded from his pen, was yet highly creditable to the youth of nineteen.

Mr. Watson's character and labours in the Derby circuit were duly appreciated by the societies and congregations, who were desirous to secure his services a second year ; but the feebleness of his health, which he thought rendered him unfit for that station, induced him to decline their request.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Watson is admitted into full connection with the conference—Appointed to the Hinckley circuit—Commences the study of Hebrew—Is unjustly suspected of holding erroneous doctrines—Meets with unkind treatment—Retires from the ministry—Acted unadvisedly in so doing—Enters into business—Marries—Spiritual declension—Becomes a private member of the Methodist New Connection—Religious improvement—Enters upon the ministry in the Methodist New Connection—Appointed to the Manchester circuit—Publishes a satirical pamphlet, called “The Book of Kane”—His diligence in the ministry—Publishes two sermons—Removal to Liverpool—Extracts from his correspondence.

IN August, 1800, Mr. Watson, who was then nineteen years and six months old, repaired to the conference in London, where, having passed acceptably through the usual four years of probation, and undergone a strict examination both in regard to his personal piety and doctrinal views, he was solemnly set apart to the full duties of the Christian ministry, and appointed to the Hinckley circuit.

Mr. Watson entered upon his new appointment under very encouraging circumstances. His talents as a preacher had been greatly improved by exercise; and his attainments as a theologian were considerable. His past success, his present prospects, and the examples of ministerial zeal and ability with which he was surrounded, all conspired to operate upon his

ardent and ingenuous mind, and to stimulate him to increased diligence, both in his ministry and studies. Mr. Edmondson, his faithful and tried friend, was in a neighbouring circuit, and their improving intercourse was still continued. "While Mr. Watson was stationed at Hinckley," observes that excellent man, "I advised him to enter upon the study of Hebrew, assuring him, from my own limited experience, that he might soon read a considerable portion of the Old Testament with ease. He took the advice, and on that day month he read the first psalm in Hebrew, accounting grammatically for every word; and he read to me a beautiful paraphrase on the whole psalm, which he had drawn up from the fine ideas expressed in the original. Such indeed was the strength of his mind, that he could quickly master any subject, however difficult, to which he directed his attention. He had for some time been successfully engaged in reading the Greek Testament; and having, with such encouraging results, entered upon the study of the Hebrew Bible, the rich and endless stores of sacred literature were placed within his reach, and offered the highest gratification to his understanding and taste.

- But the year which commenced under these promising circumstances, proved to him an

eventful and unhappy one. While he was thus employed in the duties of his office, and in laudable endeavours to render himself an "able minister of the New Testament," he met with trials which he had never anticipated, and for which he was therefore unprepared. His happiness as a man, and his usefulness as a minister were about to undergo a serious interruption.

The late Rev. Andrew Fuller, in one of his publications,* observes, "There are few, if any, thinking men, but who at some seasons have had their minds perplexed with regard to religious principles, even those which are of the highest importance. In the end, however, where the heart is right, they commonly issue in a more decided attachment to the truth." Such was the case with Richard Watson. He was at this time engaged in the study of some of the more difficult points of Christian theology, especially the doctrine of the trinity; and he read attentively all the works within his reach that treated on those subjects. Some of these writers were far from paying that absolute deference to the authority of the Holy Scriptures which is requisite in all questions of this nature; and perhaps the reading of them was

* Life of the Rev. Samuel Pearce.

not in every instance duly sanctified with prayer. It is not, therefore, at all surprising that his mind was occasionally perplexed with doubts, although we have the most decisive testimony that he never departed from "the faith once delivered to the saints." Some unguarded remarks, however, made in the hearing of persons who knew nothing of the track by which a powerful and original intellect seeks to arrive at the truth, caused him to fall under the suspicion of heresy; and it was reported that he denied the doctrines of original sin, and the proper divinity and atonement of Christ. These unfounded reports were, in his absence, most ungenerously spread through the circuit in which he laboured; and by these his character was so much injured, that, on going one evening to one of his appointments he found the house in which he was to have preached closed against him; he was refused permission to address the congregation; and was denied even a night's lodging where he had often been received "as an angel of God." Mr. Watson, who till then was entirely ignorant of the reports that had been circulated respecting him, was utterly astounded by the repulse which he met with; it was more than his spirit was able to brook; and he resented it so much that he

immediately withdrew from his work as an itinerant preacher.

The manner in which Mr. Watson was treated was highly censurable and injurious. Instead of circulating reports to his disadvantage, those who suspected his orthodoxy should have endeavoured to convince him of his supposed errors; and then, if his explanations were not satisfactory, should have brought the matter before the constituted authorities of the church. By this just and constitutional process, the accused would have had an opportunity of meeting his accusers, and answering for himself. No such course, however, was taken; and the first notice which he had of the existence of these suspicions, was the rude repulse we have just mentioned.

But while it is contended that Mr. Watson was treated with flagrant injustice, it must be admitted, on the other hand, that the manner in which he resented that treatment was equally inexcusable. There was nothing in the circumstances of the case, either to call for or to justify his retirement from the work. It is true that he could not have continued his public labours with any hope of comfort or success, under the imputations which were then cast upon him; but he does not seem to have used

the requisite means to clear himself. As it was not pretended that he had ever *preached* erroneous doctrines, there can be little doubt but that a frank and explicit disavowal of the dangerous errors he was said to hold, would at once have silenced the voice of suspicion ; and if it had not, the Discipline of the church would have afforded him effectual protection. But his spirit was high and unbending. Instead of obeying the apostolic injunction, “ Let not your good be evil spoken of,” he despised the popular clamour which was raised against him. He felt that he possessed powers and knowledge greater than those of which his principal accusers could boast ; and he would not stoop to defend himself against their unjust aspersions.

By forsaking the ministry, too, he wandered out of his providential path ; and, like another Jonah, “ fled from the presence of the Lord.” No divinely appointed minister of the gospel is at liberty to leave the work at his own option. His Master has appointed him his appropriate sphere of labour, and his Master only can dismiss him from the allotted service. “ Through evil report, and through good report,” he is to remember that “ a dispensation of the gospel is committed to him” by its Author ; and that a “ wo” is denounced against him if he “ preach it not.”

It would be difficult to point out any minister of modern times who had more satisfactory proofs of a divine call to the pastoral office than Richard Watson. He was made, in very early life, the subject of deep piety ; he possessed abilities of no common order ; Providence had in a remarkable manner prepared the way for his entrance into the work ; and the blessing of God had so far attended his labours as to render them successful in the conversion of many souls from the error of their ways. Under these circumstances, therefore, he certainly did wrong in resigning his ministry. The means of redress for the grievance he had sustained were within his reach ; but, instead of availing himself of them, he chose rather, under the influence of temptation and resentment, to take the matter into his own hands ; and the affecting record stands in the Minutes of conference for the year 1801, "Richard Watson has desisted from travelling by his own choice." By this unadvised step, which he afterward deeply repented, his personal comfort and public usefulness suffered a serious interruption. In reference to it he has often been heard to say, "I only regret that I did not lay my case before my brethren and leave myself in their hands ;" and this sentiment he repeated, with

considerable emotion, only a few days before his death.

On leaving the Methodist ministry, Mr. Watson did not unite himself with any other body of Christians. He entered into business with a respectable local preacher at Hinckley; but he soon gave it up, and went to live at Castle-Donington, where he married Miss Henshaw, a young lady of genuine piety, and of suitable accomplishments. In his marriage he was happy, but in nothing else. He felt that he had left the path of duty; and his mind was ill at ease. His moral character was unimpeachable, but his spiritual enjoyments were in a great measure lost. Direct religious intercourse with his Christian friends was at length discontinued, and even his attendance upon public worship for a few months was irregular. He laboured with exemplary diligence to establish himself in business, as a means of honest subsistence; but nothing prospered in his hands. His spirituality of mind, too, became greatly endangered, and the upbraidings of his conscience because he had laid aside the ministry to which he had been called, and solemnly set apart, were sometimes overwhelming.

His father-in-law, Mr. Henshaw, was a zealous local preacher in the Methodist New Con-

nection;* and Mr. Watson was induced at this time, with a reference to his personal salvation, to unite himself to a small society belonging to that denomination, at Hemmington, an agricultural village about a mile from Castle Donington. His conduct from this time exhibits, in a striking manner, his simplicity and godly sincerity. The leader of the class was a farmer's labourer, of plain manners, and humble capacity; and the other members were mostly of the same rank in society. The class met on the evening of a week day; and, notwithstanding the distance, Mr. Watson's attendance was punctual and regular. He was seldom known to be absent; and as he was generally the first in

* Soon after the death of Mr. Wesley, there arose a dissension among the Methodists on the subject of church government; and some of the preachers, with a considerable number of private members, being dissatisfied with the manner in which the question was settled by the conference, separated, and formed another society which they called the Methodist New Connection. They hold precisely the same doctrines as the Wesleyans; their only difference being in the matter of church government. At the head of this secession was the Rev. Alexander Kilham; and hence, the members of the Methodist New Connection are frequently termed Kilhamites. They are at the present time a highly respectable, though not very numerous, body of Christians.

attendance, he often unlocked the door and opened the shutters of the little chapel in which they met, and got every thing in readiness for the meeting. His religious improvement was very rapid. His piety soon regained its wonted ardour and stability ; and it was not long before he was requested to officiate as a local preacher among his new friends. His preaching being generally approved, it was proposed to him to become an itinerant preacher among them. To this he promptly acceded ; and it is impossible for language to express the joyous feelings with which he resumed the labours of the regular ministry, after a painful interval of two years and a half. He was sent, in the first instance, to the Manchester circuit to supply the place of another preacher ; and on receiving this appointment, he hastened with a light step and a bounding heart to the sphere of his labours.

On his admission into the New Connection, Mr. Watson underwent a very strict examination as to the correctness of his doctrinal views, in which he gave the most perfect satisfaction ; but in the matter of church government, a subject in which he then felt but little interest, no questions were proposed to him.

He arrived at Manchester in the autumn of 1803, and it was arranged that he should re-

side at Stockport. Here he was not only respected by his own people, but also lived on terms of intimacy with some of the Methodists of the Wesleyan connection. During his stay in this place, there arose a dispute in the Wesleyan society respecting the use of instrumental music in public worship. It appears that some influential members of the Wesleyan society at Stockport had succeeded in introducing into their chapel several musical instruments, although such a course was expressly forbidden by a rule of the conference, and was disapproved by a large portion of the society. The musical party was supported by the superintendent of the circuit, the Rev. Lawrence Kane, but was opposed by the other preachers. Mr. Watson wrote a satirical pamphlet in reference to this dispute, which was published under the title of "*The Book of Kane.*" It was a smart and clever production, and afforded amusement to witty people, at the expense of an erring individual, and of the parties by whom he was supported; but as the writer belonged to another religious denomination, and was not immediately interested in the question at issue, it would perhaps have been better had he forbore to interfere. The object of the publication was to discourage what Mr. Watson be-

lieved to be a serious evil, the use of musical instruments in public worship; the *motives* of the author were, therefore, praiseworthy. We cannot, however, commend the form in which the pamphlet was written. The style was an imitation of the historical books of the Old Testament, and therefore presented an example of that levity which connects sacred things with ridicule, and which is equally opposed to Christian piety and good taste. No man had a deeper conviction of the evil of such sallies of perverted ingenuity, or more rigidly abstained from them, both in his conversation and writings, than did Mr. Watson in the subsequent years of his life.

On resuming the full duties of the Christian ministry, Mr. Watson applied himself to study with a diligence and ardour peculiar to himself; and his "profiting appeared unto all." His preaching often displayed an energy and a vigour, both of thought and expression, which gave strong indications of future eminence. His ministry was attended by several persons who refused to unite in church fellowship with any denomination of Christians; and with a special reference to their case, he preached three sermons at Stockport, on the duty and advantages of Christian communion. He la-

boured in the discharge of his duties with fidelity and zeal; and though his health was but feeble, he often, like his divine Master, preached in the open air, seeking, in order that he might save, the lost.

During his residence at Stockport he occasionally contributed to the pages of the Methodist New Connection Magazine. In the early part of the volume for 1806 is inserted a sermon of his on religious meditation, founded on Gen. xxiv, 63,—“*And Isaac went out to meditate in the fields at the eventide.*” This was the first pulpit discourse that he ever prepared for publication. About the same time, too, he published, at the request of the congregation to whom it was addressed, a sermon on Hosea iv, 6, preached in behalf of the Sunday school connected with the chapel in which he regularly officiated. These sermons contain passages of considerable force and beauty, and reflect great credit upon both the abilities and piety of the author.

Among other works which Mr. Watson carefully studied at this period of his life was Stackhouse’s “*Body of Divinity*,” a large folio volume of great research, compiled principally from the writings of the English Episcopal divines. His copy of this work contains nu-

merous manuscript notes, which are dated "Stockport, Cheshire," and some of which display considerable acuteness. For the purpose of illustrating his habits of attention, a few specimens may be given.

In page 282, Stackhouse suggests, "that the parley between the serpent and Eve might have been of long continuance, though it is briefly set down by Moses;" an opinion for which he assigns several reasons. Mr. Watson observes,—“A subject of no importance at all; but these remarks are certainly forcible. For, evil being contrary to the constitution of their nature, there must needs have been very strong temptations to overcome the natural tendency of the will to obedience; and these temptations must first become familiar, by being often repeated, to remove that disgust which they at first sight were likely to create. Some time they must have had to operate upon the passions, unless we suppose Eve to have been taken by surprise, which is not at all probable.”

Stackhouse proposes, p. 289, a number of questions respecting God's permission of the fall of Adam, with suggestions of means by which it might have been prevented. Mr. Watson writes, "The best answer to such queries is Here is a fact, which cannot be disproved.

Man is fallen. The *whys* and the *wherefores* belong not to us, but to God. ‘Who hath known the mind of the Lord?’”

Stackhouse says, p. 574, “This was the natural effect of sin in all ages, that it, filling men’s minds with dreadful apprehensions of God, and making them afraid to approach him of themselves, drove them to the necessity either of giving off all intercourse with him, or of finding out some other to make intercession for them; and this seems to have given rise to the first institution of demon worship among the Gentiles.” Mr. Watson remarks, “I do not think that this accounts for demon worship. Did not men become gross in their conceptions of the divine nature, and give to God a far-distant locality; and then invent these imaginary beings to act, not only as intercessors, but as messengers between them and the far-distant gods?”

These hasty memoranda are not given as the mature thoughts of Mr. Watson, or as in every instance solving the difficulties to which they refer; but to show the habit of strict investigation which he had formed. He wisely read, not to fill his mind with indigested notions, “but to weigh and consider.” The happy consequences of this course became increasingly

manifest as he advanced in life. He became an example of extensive and well-digested reading.

After a stay of two years and a half, Mr. Watson was removed, in 1806, from the Manchester circuit to Liverpool, where he was stationed alone. Here his preaching excited considerable attention, and Christians of various denominations, especially the Wesleyan Methodists, both preachers and private members, were often found assembled round his pulpit, listening with deep emotion to a ministry equally original, evangelical, and impressive.

Mr. Watson's pastoral duties at Liverpool were very light; he had regularly to supply one small chapel in the town, and this was nearly all the official duty that devolved upon him. He had, therefore, ample leisure for study; and his ministry and writings, during the remainder of his life, fully demonstrate how well he improved it.

At Manchester Mr. Watson had formed a permanent friendship with several individuals, and with some of them he maintained, for many years, an affectionate correspondence. The following are extracts of letters which he wrote during the first year of his residence at Liverpool:—

“ To Mr. Thomas Faulkner, Manchester.

“ Liverpool, July 2d, 1806.

“ DEAR SIR,—By another revolution of the wheel of human vicissitude, I am found in Liverpool; and as I am unwilling to believe that my friends are so perfectly uninterested as not to wish to know how as well as where I am, I have sat down to scribble four epistles for one post. The air of this place I found, for the first four or five days, to be extremely piercing. I was unwell, and my hard-belaboured lungs, ‘shot pangs, strange pangs; and, as I thought, prophetic of their end.’ I thank God, however, that they proved to be of a more assimilating nature than I apprehended; and the air and they appear to have entered into a closer alliance, and more strict terms of friendship. I have bathed, and it has been beneficial; I walk along the shore, and enjoy the double advantage of solitude and exercise, meditation and animal refreshment. Could I transplant my old friends to Liverpool, or the advantages of Liverpool to my old friends, I should think myself the happiest man on earth, but ‘shall it be as thou wilt?’ Nature has not formed me in one of those rugged moulds, nor of those rigid materials, which cannot relax

and feel. I have felt most sensibly my separation from that little chosen band with whom I have spent so many hours of improvement and pleasure. The remembrance is equally painful and pleasing; and it is painful in proportion to the pleasure. I should think worse of myself if I did not feel, though I have felt more than I expected.

“My situation is in every respect comfortable; and I doubt not will remain so. I thank God for an increasing attachment in my own mind to his religion and to his work. He is my God, and I will exalt him. Religion, my dear sir, is all. It is Heaven’s greatest gift to man. Fairest, loveliest form in heaven, she has made her dwelling with man, and her delight is with the sons of men. All the fabled power of enchantment belongs to her, and to her alone. She appears, and the desert blossoms as a rose; the darkness of human nature vanishes; every object is gilded with her light; and the immensity beams with glory. She smiles, and the heart is eased of its load of woe, affliction, and sorrows. Her eye darts pity, and her accents breathe forgiveness. Wandering in error, she shows us the path of life. Perverse and obstinate in misery, her influence controls us. Wandering from happiness, in the ardent

pursuit of deceitful pleasures, she opens a vista to the skies, and lets loose the powers of the soul among the objects of an immortal life. Celestial visitant, may we never forsake thee ! Whatever else we lose, may we possess thee ! To whatever separations the changing scene of this present life painfully subjects us, may we ever be joined to thee, and become one spirit with thee !

“ I feel sincerely attached to every part of your family. May they all be taught of God ; and may your decline of life be cheered with the happy prospect of leaving them all in possession of that most invaluable treasure, principles pure and evangelical, and a conduct regulated by just views of God, and faith in Jesus Christ ! Yours very affectionately.

“ P. S. Our children are well ;* but Mrs. Watson continues poorly. Liverpool has not made any alteration for the better in her health.”

Our next extracts are rather lengthy, but they will amply repay a careful perusal. They are from letters addressed to Mr. John Faulkner, son of the preceding, who was then a lively young man, well disposed, but not decidedly pious. Mr. Watson, therefore, directs his at-

* Mr. Watson had two children ; a son named Thomas, and a daughter Mary.

tention to subjects of the highest importance, and recommends to him true religion under the name of "virtue."

"To Mr. John Faulkner.

"Liverpool, September 13th, 1806.

"MY DEAR LAD,—You desire me to write you a long letter. I will, though I should tire your patience. But I will not fill it with trifles, because I have too much attachment to you; and because you have too much good sense to desire it. You are now in the most important stage of life. You occupy the anxieties, and inherit the warmest wishes of your friends. Now is the time for you to acquire that knowledge, to form those principles, to engrave that character upon your mind, which shall favour your entrance into life, and direct you with safety through it. * * * *

* * There are two objects to which your attention is imperatively called,—knowledge and virtue; children of the same parent, inseparable companions, and mutual helpers of the happiness of man. The importance and value of the first I need not attempt to prove. 'That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good,' and that none but fools love folly, are positions of one of the wisest of men, which neither you

nor I shall question. Knowledge is the food of the mind, the support of its vigour, and the parent of its growth. There is a capacity of improvement in the human intellect, of which the more we avail ourselves, the greater amplitude and greatness of soul we acquire; the more we honour God by the improvement of his gifts; the more real dignity we associate with our characters; the more worthy we are of the appellations of rational and immortal; and the better are we fitted for every useful purpose in life. The objects of human knowledge, however, being almost infinite, we must select those which our time and opportunity place within our reach; taking care that whatever we fix upon, it shall be capable of affording us solid and useful information. Have you not seen with disgust a pert, two-legged animal, miscalled a man, on whom a decent education has been thrown away, or its effects been annihilated by a passion for novel reading? His imagination, heated by fiction, and, like a balloon filled with inflammable air, ascending the higher in proportion as the solidity of judgment is separated from it, he acts a contemptible and romantic part in common life; he offends by his ceaseless loquacity; he insults by his ignorance; he becomes intolerable, because he bur-

lesques and caricatures human nature. Sensible conversation is to such a being insipid ; sober-minded men constitute a company irksome and repulsive ; he glitters, but does not shine ; he tattles, but does not talk ; his stage is the tea-table, and his audience love-sick lasses.

* * * * *

With the names of honour, friendship, and virtue on his lips, he is base, treacherous, and licentious. From reading of this kind, little is to be gained but sponginess of intellect, pertness of demeanour, and an unnatural character.

“Let us seek solid information in *history*, which makes us acquainted with our forefathers ; *philosophy*, which displays the wondrous works of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness ; *geography*, which is conversant with the abodes, habitudes, and relations of men ; *astronomy*, which carries us to distant worlds, and colonies from heaven ; and above all in *theology*, which leads us even to the throne of God, and displays his glory ;—which unfolds the amazing scene of human redemption, and enables us to behold the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ;—explains the causes of the misery we all feel, and promises the happiness we all wish ;—raises the degraded spirit from the servitude of vice, and restores it to honour, to dig-

nity, to holiness ;—forms the purpose of return in the heart of the restless and unhappy fugitive, aids the execution, and withdraws not her influence till she hath placed us in the forgiving bosom of eternal Love, and in the unalienable fruition of life and immortality. This is knowledge, rational, exalting, beneficial, and immortal.

“ Having introduced you to knowledge, let me have the honour of presenting you also to *virtue*. You have the greatest reason to be thankful that you have examples of virtue in those who continually surround you, and whose influence is strengthened by natural relationship as well as religion. To their well wishes I would join my own. * * * *

There is nothing so beautiful, so sweet as virtue. * * * * It is easy to talk and boast of pleasure ; but in the opinion of a reasonable being, no gratification that is inconsistent with peace and purity can merit so agreeable a name. Virtue is the source, and the only source of pleasure. Thus sung the immortal Milton :—

‘ He that has light within his own clear breast
 Mây sit i’ th’ centre, and enjoy bright day ;
 But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
 Benighted walks under the mid-day sun :
 Himself is his own dungeon.’

“Did religion do nothing but save us from the reproaches of our own hearts, it would do much ; it would, on this account, be in the highest sense of the word estimable ; for a ‘wounded spirit who can bear?’ Where shall we look for happiness if not within? Should this forsake us, what a gloom is thrown over life ! what a house of darkness is the world ! what a wretch is man ! ‘Thine heart,’ says an offended God to a sinner, ‘thine heart shall meditate terror ;’ and what then shall sooth and condole us ? what human skill can devise a balm to heal wounds inflicted by Heaven ? The attempt were vain. It would irritate and inflame, but not heal. From the dark abyss, the dismal chaos of a condemning mind, but one hand can draw us, and that is the hand of mercy ; and what may add to our consolation, a hand never solicited in vain. It shall bring our feet out of the mire and the clay, and set them upon a rock. Silencing our fears, and saving us from our doubts, we shall bear the noble testimony of the apostle, ‘Our hearts condemn us not, and we have confidence toward God.’ But it does more for us ; it gives a positive happiness, fills the void over which we languish, satisfies the hungry soul, and makes glad the sorrowful soul, opens springs in the wilderness, and rivers

in the desert, makes our cup to run over with blessings, and anoints us with the oil of gladness. Virtue gives whatever is great and good in man. Honour, probity, fidelity, sympathy, friendship, social and domestic happiness ; all these are but empty sounds in the mouth of any but a virtuous character. She gives joys which vice never, with all her flattering promises, pretends to offer ; and bestows a zest, a relish upon those that are common to all, which they cannot have without her. Her influence spreads through life, diverges into every condition, penetrates into every state ; the guardian of youth, the honour of manhood, and the crown of age ; the shield of prosperity, and the prop of affliction ; our guide in actual life, and our solace in retirement. She holds the keys of life, and will finally open to us the gate of immortality.

“ I must now leave you. Believe me when I say that I wish you every thing that can make you useful and happy.”

“ To Mr. John Faulkner, of Manchester.

“ Liverpool, Feb. 9th, 1807.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I have embraced the present opportunity to send a short epistle, according to promise ; but have a horrid pen, and the

penknife is mislaid. We returned from Manchester, as you saw, thick and three-fold in the vehicle ; but arrived safe. Danger, however, is neither confined to adventurous voyaging in the mighty world of waters, nor to those terrene conveyances, when you trust your neck to a slender spring and a drunken coachman. She possesses a kind of omnipresence ; and successfully wields a thunder storm, or a grain of sand ; and accomplishes her purposes by means great and small, dreaded and despised. Somehow or other, it appears that I had incurred the wrath of the old beldame ; and the punishment she chose in her wisdom to inflict was a subterraneous plunge into one of those mantraps with which her prime ministers in Liverpool have so plentifully bestrewed the streets. Whether she intended to break my neck or my leg, to perforate my skull, or to dislocate my shoulder, I shall not now determine ; though the fall was sufficient for all these ; but my guardian angel brought me off with only a sprained knee, which I take as a friendly memento. It has a voice which says, ‘ Walk more carefully in the night, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.’

“ Seriously, I have hurt myself very much, and am yet confined to the house. My journey to

Chester was attended with circumstances both painful and pleasing. Travelling in pain, preaching in still greater, with a leg swelled to four times its natural size, and highly inflamed ; dragged to and from the chapel in a gig, and confined, when in the house, to its precincts ; going into the town in the dark, and leaving it before light, without any gratification arising from the novelty of a place not visited before ; tossed upon the river on my return, so as neither to sit nor stand ;—these, and other circumstances, were not the most pleasing. On the other hand, the kind attentions of friends, a sense of the divine presence, and a tolerable degree of freedom in preaching the word, may be balanced against the former ; and, on the whole, I have nothing to regret, though the exertion has protracted the recovery of my limb. Next sabbath I preach a funeral sermon in Mount Pleasant chapel, belonging to the old friends, who have lent it to us for the occasion ; and to-morrow I expect to dine in company with the preachers. Being confined, I have not had an opportunity to call upon Miss ——, with the message of your beloved. I shall call when I can walk ; but I suppose that it will be a few days longer. Now we are upon the subject, let me say that I am glad you are in love. With the

object of your affection I have not the pleasure to be acquainted ; but have no doubt she is every way worthy of it. It is equally conducive to happiness and rectitude to form an honourable attachment of that kind. The human heart is formed for love ; and love and friendship are among those efficacious causes which the goodness of the divine Being hath still left on earth to humanize the soul, and soften the asperities of life. In that connection be sincere. If you have made your choice with deliberation, abide by it. Caprice is at enmity with love. There must be an unbounded confidence and exclusive preference. The heart must be kept free from suspicion, and every wish must beat in unison. It must not be unnoticed, that esteem is the only sure basis of love. Build it upon whatever else you please,—on youth, on beauty, on wealth, on affability of temper, on diligence, on assiduity,—all will fail but virtue ; and the fondest affection, by degrees will sink into indifference, carelessness, aversion, and perhaps hatred. Just views of God, a conduct regulated by them, the temper of the heart softened by divine influence, supreme love to the Author of all our benefits, a calm, tranquil confidence in his mercy and guidance through the promise of his Son, and

a constant endeavour to approve yourselves to him in all the public and private walks of life: these will make you acceptable to each other; you will reflect with pleasure upon the commencement of your acquaintance, you will bless the Providence which has made you the sharers of each other's griefs and joys; and, after having filled up the offices of life, you will find your friendship and love made perfect in a better and heavenly state. I feel much interested in your welfare. May the gracious Being who superintends the affairs of his unworthy creatures, guide you by his counsel, and distinguish your future lives with the communication of every necessary blessing of life and salvation. Present my sincere respects to your unknown. My most affectionate remembrances to the whole family."

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Watson is admitted into full connection with the conference—Is returned to Liverpool—Writes a history of that town, and of the reign of George III.—Assists in the management of a weekly paper—Letter to Mr. Faulkner—Appointed a third year to Liverpool—Publishes a letter to Mr. Roscoe—Failure of his health—Return to Liverpool as a supernumerary—Instance of his readiness at preaching—Resumes his ministry, and is appointed to Manchester circuit—Expository preaching—Lord Sidmouth's bill—Mr. Watson's health again fails—He leaves the New Connection and rejoins the Wesleyan Society—Settles at Liverpool—Improvement of his health—Resumes his ministry among the Wesleys—Letter to his father—His father's death.

AT the conference in 1807, Mr. Watson, having finished the period of his probation as a minister in the Methodist New Connection, was admitted into full connection. His brethren showed their estimate of his character by appointing him secretary of the conference at the same time. They also requested him to write the annual pastoral address to the societies.

Being reappointed to Liverpool, Mr. Watson returned to that town, where he continued his acceptable ministry, and occasionally exercised himself in literary composition. He compiled a popular history and description of Liverpool, which was published in a neat pocket volume, by his friend Mr. Kaye, and was well received, both by the natives and by strangers who visited the place. At the re-

quest of the same friend, he also wrote a brief history of the reign of George III., as a continuation of Dr. Goldsmith's "Abridgment of the History of England." It occupies about seventy closely printed duodecimo pages, and contains some spirited sketches of the characters of eminent individuals, and of public events. In the management of a weekly journal, called the *Liverpool Courier*, which Mr. Kaye commenced publishing about this time, Mr. Watson lent his valuable assistance. He wrote the prospectus, and also many of the leading articles, which were so much admired that they were regularly copied and circulated through the country by one of the most popular of the London daily papers, [the *Courier*,] which had not, however, the honesty to acknowledge the source from which they were derived.

In the midst of his engagements and studies Mr. Watson did not neglect his correspondence with his friends. The following letter, which was addressed, in December, 1807, to Mr. Faulkner. jun., manifests the kindness of his heart, and his anxiety to turn a painful bereavement to the spiritual benefit of a young friend :—

"DEAR SIR,—I was affected, but not surprised, to hear of the death of your sister

From events of this kind much good may be derived, however painful they may be to our feelings.

‘Smitten friends are messengers of love :

For us they sicken, and for us they die.’

The fervent glow of life does but waste the oil of the lamp which sustains its light ; and our approaches to vigour and manhood are but approaches to the grave. Few love to think on death. The thought is not pleasing. It cannot, with its melancholy reflections ; and it is not necessary that it should constantly occupy our minds. But it is necessary that it should occupy them more than perhaps it does ; and the death of friends imperiously forces the subject upon us. The wise consider their latter end, and make it their business to divest its approaches of alarm ; and so to live, that the last act of life, the act of dying, may be honourable to their memories, and easy to their minds. ‘For me to live is Christ,’ says an apostle, ‘and to die is gain ;’ and it is only such a life that can produce such a death. The living faith of a Christian realizes unseen objects, and gives them, even in this world, a present subsistence. Hence his better thoughts repose in heaven ; and though he is in the world, he is not of the world. He enters now by faith

where Jesus his forerunner is entered; and death only brings him personally into that region in which by faith and love he had his dwelling place before. Two things prepare us either for life or death: an interest in Christ; and a firm and settled intention to please him in our conduct. May they be possessed by you!

‘Then when the last, the closing hour draws nigh,
And earth recedes before my swimming eye;
When trembling on the doubtful edge of fate,
I stand, and stretch my views to either state;
Teach me to quit this transitory scene
With decent triumph, and a look serene;
Teach me to fix my ardent hopes on high,
And, having lived to thee, in thee to die.’

“I have been indisposed from a severe cold. Little Tom is ill of the measles; and Mrs. Watson is very unwell. I write in haste, and have not time to add more.”

At the conference of the New Connection in 1808 Mr. Watson was a second time appointed secretary, and was also again requested to write the annual pastoral address. His health being at that time too delicate to allow him to perform the duties of an extensive circuit, he was a third time returned to Liverpool, where he had not much travelling, and was consequently but little exposed to the night air. The

interest excited by his preaching suffered no abatement. His ministry during this year was more successful than it had been in either of the preceding ones. Many of those who had been attracted to the chapel by the fame of his eloquence, were brought to a serious concern for their spiritual welfare, and led anxiously to inquire what they must do to be saved; and the little society under his pastoral care was strengthened by the addition of sixty-five members. He also published, in the course of this year, "A Letter to William Roscoe, Esq.," being a reply to a pamphlet, written by that gentleman, on the subject of the war with France, in which England was then engaged.

Meanwhile Mr. Watson's health continued to decline; and he was, therefore, at the conference in May, 1809, returned to Liverpool as a supernumerary.* Three years before, he had complained, in one of his letters, that his lungs were affected; and that the manner in which they laboured appeared to him "prophetic of their end." These unfavourable symptoms, however, at that time subsided; but they now returned, and presented a most alarming appear-

* Mr. Watson's colleague this year was the Rev. Robert Nicholson, who soon after left the Methodist New Connection, and joined the Wesleyan conference.

ance. The blood oozed from his lungs, and he was compelled for a time almost entirely to desist from preaching. In a letter which he wrote to a friend, in the month of November, he says :—" With respect to my health, I continue in a very precarious state. I am not wholly free from the spitting of blood, and have almost constant pain in my breast. I at present preach little, and with difficulty perform that share of duty ; but I feel that all things are most wisely ordered by a kind and gracious Providence ; and rest with full confidence upon this great truth, that ' all things work together for good to them that love God.' "

This comparative cessation from preaching proved so beneficial to his health, that in a few months he was enabled to resume his pulpit labours with some degree of frequency. He delivered a series of discourses on the attributes of God, and another on the Epistle to the Hebrews ; both of which were greatly admired, and rendered very profitable to his hearers.

Mr. Watson possessed such a fulness of information on all subjects connected with theology, and had such a copious command of language, that he was almost constantly prepared to preach on any occasion, however peculiar and difficult. Of this he gave a striking proof

on one occasion during this year. While he was in the chapel attending divine service on a Sunday morning, the steeple of a neighbouring church fell with a tremendous crash upon the congregation, and many lives were lost. Mr. Watson was deeply affected by this catastrophe; and his impressions were strengthened by the fact that, not many minutes before, he had walked close by this building on his way to the chapel, unconscious of danger. As the time of the evening service approached, Mr. Nicholson expressed a wish that Mr. Watson would address the congregation, and suggested the following as a very appropriate text:—"Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii, 4, 5. Mr. Watson complied with the proposal; and with scarcely any time for preparation, delivered to a crowded assembly one of the most impressive and eloquent discourses that ever fell from his lips.

At the conference of 1810, Mr. Watson was again, after an interval of four years, appointed to the Manchester circuit. Here, as well as in Liverpool, several individuals belonging to the Wesleyan connection were in

the habit of frequently attending his ministry. His stated congregations, however, were not large, nor did they seem in general duly to appreciate the excellence of his discourses.

Anxious that the people to whom he ministered should understand the Scriptures, Mr. Watson was accustomed to devote a large share of his pulpit labours to the exposition of entire portions of the sacred writings. Thus he had delivered to his congregation in Liverpool a course of lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews; and he now addressed a similar course on the Epistle to the Ephesians to a small, but select and deeply attentive congregation at a village near Manchester. This method of *expository* preaching was a favourite one with the old Puritan divines; and it is matter of regret, that a practice so admirably adapted to instruct a congregation in those "Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation," is not more general at the present day.*

* That distinguished commentator, the Rev. Matthew Henry, was accustomed every sabbath morning, before the sermon, to read and expound to his congregation a portion of the Old Testament, proceeding regularly from the book of Genesis; and in the evening he expounded, with the same regularity, a portion of the New Testament. In this manner, during his ministry at Chester, he more than once went through the whole of the sacred oracles. No

During Mr. Watson's residence at Manchester, an insidious attempt was made, by some bigoted adherents of the established Church, to abridge the religious privileges of the Protestant dissenters. By the "Act of Toleration," passed in the reign of William III., all Protestant teachers of religion who took certain prescribed oaths were protected by the law in their public ministrations, and were exempted from serving in the militia, and from many civil duties to which other citizens were liable; and these oaths every magistrate was required to administer to any person professing to be a preacher who should apply for that purpose. In the early part of 1811 a bill was introduced into the house of lords, by Lord Sidmouth, the professed object of which was merely so to amend and explain the "Act," as to prevent improper persons from taking the oaths and obtaining a license to preach, that they might exempt themselves from civil offices; but its practical operation would have been exceedingly oppressive and annoying to all classes of dissenters, and especially to the Methodists.

one acquainted with this fact, observes his biographer, will be surprised to learn that his congregation were, like the "noble Bereans," remarkable for their knowledge of Scripture.

Indeed, had it been made the law of the land, and strictly enforced, it would have effected the entire subversion of the Wesleyan ministry. The provisions of the "bill" were, however, so artfully framed that its pernicious tendency was not at first suspected, even by those whose dearest rights were so injuriously affected by it.

It was at this time that Mr. Watson first became acquainted with the Rev. Jabez Bunting. Both these gentlemen had been preaching at Stockport one Sunday, and met on their way to Manchester in the evening, when "Lord Sidmouth's Bill" became the subject of conversation. They both saw the evil consequences that would result from its becoming a law; and Mr. Watson, at Mr. Bunting's request, wrote, and published in one of the Manchester papers, a stirring appeal to the dissenters, in which he clearly pointed out the design and tendency of the "bill," and urged the necessity of an immediate and strenuous opposition to it. The alarm was also sounded in other places, and in a few days the nation was in a ferment. On the day that the bill was to have been read a second time, upward of six hundred petitions were presented against it;* and the advocates

* Of these petitions, two hundred and fifty, bearing thirty thousand signatures, were from Methodist societies, and

of intolerance were so completely abashed by the opposition which their obnoxious measure had excited, that a motion to reject the bill was carried without a division.

At the conference held in June, 1811, Mr. Watson was reappointed to the Manchester circuit; but before the close of the year his health again failed him. The bleeding of his lungs returned, and there appeared little probability that he would ever be able for any length of time to perform the duties of an itinerant preacher. He had long been dissatisfied with the discipline of the Methodist New Connection, and therefore in some degree unhappy in his union with that body. He now came to the resolution of resigning the situation which he occupied in it; and having done so, he removed to Liverpool, where, after the lapse of a

were all got up in the course of five days. They were presented to the house of lords by the celebrated Lord Erskine, who, in his speech on the occasion, bore an honourable testimony to the character and usefulness of the venerable founder of Methodism. "He was," said he, "a man with whom I had the honour to be acquainted; whom I have heard expound 'the word of life;' and whose labours have not been equalled, since the days of the apostles, for general usefulness to his fellow subjects. A man more pious and devoted, more loyal to his king, or more sincerely attached to his country, has never lived."

few months, he offered himself as a private member of society in the Wesleyan Connection. On his admission into the society he remarked, with deep feeling, that then, for the first time during the last eleven years, his mind was fully at rest.

In retiring from the New Connection he acted in accordance with the advice of some of his most intelligent and confidential friends belonging to it; they thought that, with his views, he would be likely to be both more happy and useful among his old associates, from whom he had formerly departed under the pressure of unkind treatment, and of strong temptation, and not from any difference of opinion, either as to doctrine or discipline. The *manner* in which he retired was highly honourable to him. He had joined the New Connection Methodists at a time when he was exceedingly anxious to enter again upon the regular duties of the Christian ministry, and when every other door appeared to be closed against him; and when, after a practical acquaintance with the system of church government adopted by them, he became dissatisfied with it, he made no attempt to disturb the tranquillity of the societies with which he was connected, but continued peacefully to labour among them in word and in doc-

trine, until he was by sickness rendered unable any longer to fulfil the duties of his ministry ; he then availed himself of the opportunity quietly to retire from the body, without attempting to influence any of its members to follow his example.

No hostile feelings on either side accompanied the separation. It was with the system that Mr. Watson was dissatisfied, and not with his brethren. From *them* he had received nothing but kindness during the whole period of his connection with them. They had received him into their body when he was in a great measure friendless and an outcast ; had selected appointments for him suited to his feeble health ; and had placed him in almost every office of trust and honour, except that of president of the conference. His esteem and love for his brethren in the New Connection suffered no abatement on his withdrawal from them ; and his subsequent and long-continued correspondence with several of his intimate friends in that body, shows that they still continued to regard him with feelings of affection and confidence.

In leaving the New Connection he was far from being actuated by any motives of self-interest. He resigned a certain income for that

which was contingent; and his prospects in regard to temporal things were dark and discouraging. He had made no arrangement whatever for admission into the Wesleyan ministry. Had his health been *good*, it was uncertain whether the Wesleyan conference would receive him; and there was little probability that a sickly man, wearing marks of consumption and decay, with a wife and two children, could be so admitted as to have, for himself and his family, a permanent claim upon the conference funds. Secular motives were therefore out of the question. He obeyed the dictates of his understanding and conscience, in the integrity of his heart, trusting in God; and the important services which in the subsequent years of his life he was called to render to the cause of Christianity, both at home and abroad, fully demonstrate that, in taking this important step, he followed the leadings of a wise Providence who was guiding him into paths of usefulness, of which neither he nor his friends had at that time any conception.

Mr. Watson being now, as he believed, providentially laid aside from the work of the ministry, engaged himself at an annual salary to his friend Mr. Kaye, as editor of the Liverpool Courier, and for other literary services.

Rest and quietness, however, were of such service to him, that his general health soon improved; the bleeding of his lungs subsided; and, feeling himself able to preach occasionally, he was accepted as a local preacher, and at times occupied the Wesleyan pulpits, both in Liverpool and the surrounding country.

When he settled at Liverpool he had little hope of ever being able to resume his itinerant labours; but those who knew him best were assured that if his health should in any competent degree be restored, he would again fully devote himself to the Christian ministry. This he felt to be his special calling; and he had no greater pleasure than to be employed in preaching Christ, and him crucified. The ministers then stationed on the circuit,—the Rev. Messrs. Entwisle, West, Gaulter, and Buckley,—having heard him preach, and believing him to be eminently qualified for extensive usefulness, united in requesting him to offer himself to the conference, again to take his place in the Wesleyan travelling ministry; and Mr. Bunting, who visited Liverpool at the time, earnestly joined in the solicitation. After due deliberation and prayer, he yielded to their entreaties, and was recommended to the district meeting, and afterward to the conference, who received

him very cordially ; and without being subjected to any further probation, he was placed precisely in the circumstances in which he stood, when, eleven years before, he left his work in the Hinckley circuit. Never did the Wesleyan conference receive into its communion a minister of greater or more useful talents, or of more sound and enlightened piety ; and never was a Methodist preacher more ardently attached to his brethren, and to the doctrines and discipline of the society, than was Mr. Watson, from the time of his readmission in 1812, to the end of his days.

In offering himself to the conference, Mr. Watson greatly disappointed the hopes of his friend Mr. Kaye, who had calculated much upon his valuable literary labours ; and he was far from consulting his own temporal advantage. Proposals of a very flattering nature were made to him at this time by persons in authority, if he would remove to London, and employ his pen in the public service ; but he was persuaded that the Lord had called him to another and more important work ; and he had felt too severely the consequences of disobedience to that voice in his earlier years, to hesitate for a moment in his choice between devoting himself to the Christian ministry, and

any other pursuit, however apparently advantageous.

Mr. Watson's first appointment after this happy reunion with his earliest religious associates was to the Wakefield circuit; and with as little delay as possible he repaired to his field of labour. His colleague and superintendent, the Rev. James Buckley, says,—“ We entered upon our work with much cordiality and affection, and met together every Saturday, to review the occurrences of the past week, and devise measures in relation to the future; uniting in prayer for the divine direction, and the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, ‘ that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified.’ These meetings were attended with many advantages; affording assistance in the choice of subjects, and in our preparations for the pulpit; in carrying plans of discipline into practical effect; and greatly tending to promote the unity of the Spirit. I had occasionally an opportunity of hearing my friend preach. His sermons were not always what are called great; greatness appeared to bend to the profit of a particular class of his hearers; yet that might be said of every one of his sermons which a Scottish professor once said of a discourse delivered by Mr. Wesley:—‘ If it

was not a masterly sermon, none but a master could have preached it.'”

It was shortly after Mr. Watson's arrival in the Wakefield circuit that his biographer, Mr. Jackson, first became acquainted with him. He came to Halifax to preach at the reopening of the Methodist chapel there, which had just been considerably enlarged. His text was, “*Thy children which thou shalt have, shall say again in thine ears, ‘The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell,’*” Isa. xlix, 20; and the subject of the discourse was the enlargement of the Christian church. Mr. Jackson had frequently before this heard Mr. Watson spoken of as a man of extraordinary talents, but he had no adequate conception of the greatness of his powers as a Christian preacher. He says,—“The sermon on this occasion was the loftiest display of intellect and eloquence I had ever witnessed. It exhibited such a grasp of thought, a force of reasoning, and splendour of illustration, and at the same time was so rich in Christian sentiment and pious feeling, as to produce an almost overwhelming sensation of wonder and delight. The impression it made upon my mind will never be effaced. More than twenty years have elapsed since its delivery, but the re-

collection of it is as distinct and vivid as ever."

In the latter part of this year [1812] Mr. Watson was called to mourn the loss of his aged father, who had for some time been labouring under a dropsical complaint, the fatal termination of which was daily expected. Mr. Watson, being by the feebleness of his own health at this time prevented from visiting his afflicted parent, addressed to him the following letter, in which are strikingly displayed the strength of his filial affection, and his deep solicitude for the spiritual interests of one so nearly related to him :—

" Wakefield, Nov. 12th, 1812.

" MY DEAREST FATHER,—After having had many anxious thoughts concerning you, I was just sitting down to write to you when I received my sister's letter. I notice in it your desire to see me ; and be assured that I am anxious also to see you ; and if I can do so I will. Our confinement in the circuit is, however, great ; and I am very unfit for a journey, owing to my remaining very poorly ; being subject to sudden bilious attacks, so that sometimes I know not but I may even escape before you into the world of spirits.

" For myself, afflictions have been good, very

good for me ; and I bless God for them. He corrects like a father ; and severe diseases require severe remedies. Happy for us, if the divine Physician does not administer in vain ! I have not forgotten you at a throne of grace. Every time I bow my knees I entreat God to bestow his supporting, saving, and comforting grace upon my dear parent ; and I trust that I have not joined my feeble prayers to yours in vain. Again, I would say that God has a good purpose to accomplish in your affliction, and therefore entreat him to perform his work of salvation fully. You are in the furnace ; and it afflicts me to hear that the dispensation is so severe, and the fire so hot ; yet, if the stubborn dross of our sins cannot be otherwise separated from our souls, all is mercy still. ‘ I will sit as a refiner’s fire,’ saith the Lord ; and it is comfortable to reflect that he does sit by and watch the operation. Yet, with submission to his will, it cannot be wrong to pray that he would mitigate your sufferings, make for you a smoother road to the house appointed for all living, or so increase your inward strength and comforts, that the soul may become less sensible to the pains of the body, and that you, like dying martyrs, may shout and triumph in the flame itself.

“I trust that you are satisfied as to your acceptance with God ; nay, that you can rejoice in the full assurance of his love revealed to you by his Holy Spirit. Be determined to obtain this ; for there is no other ground of safety and happiness than an application of the blood of atonement to our consciences, taking away the guilt of sin, and the condemning power of the law. It is to be received by an act of faith. Be persuaded that Christ is able to bless you with his full and glorious comfort *now*, and venture your whole upon him ; wait every moment for the evidence that the work is done, till faith, and joy, and praise spring up in your heart. This would be necessary, were you in health ; but now the time is short, and more than commonly uncertain. O wrestle like Jacob, till you obtain the blessing.

“In like manner proceed to obtain the full sanctification of your nature. It is not death, but grace that must destroy our sins, and make us meet for heaven. Have faith in the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit in all the power he exerted on the day of pentecost, to burn up the very root of corruption, and fill you in a moment with all the love and power of God, making you one with Christ, and an entirely new creature.

“By the same acts of praying faith expect perfect patience, peace, and love to be wrought in your mind, that you may come up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and spring up a mature Christian, saying, ‘Not my will, but thine be done.’

‘The language of Mr. Charles Wesley on his death-bed may be suitable to your case :—

‘In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem ?
Jesus, my all in all thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart ;
O might I catch a smile from thee,
And drop into eternity !’

“You are indeed in affliction, as a ‘leaf before the wind ;’ but there is a merciful and compassionate High Priest, who knows how to succour you, being tempted and tried like unto you. O cast yourself at his feet. Tell him you have heard of his compassions, and wait to prove them. Tell him that you are nothing, can do nothing, and wait to prove him to be your all in all. Have large and high thoughts of the boundless mercy of God ; for though we have sinned grievously, and awfully neglected his salvation, he is the Saviour still. He hateth putting away, and delighteth in mercy. He still spreads to receive us arms of

mercy ; and his voice is, ‘Come unto me ; for I came to seek and save that which was lost.’
O may you and I, and all of us,

‘To his arms of mercy fly,
Find our lasting quiet there.’

I sympathize with my mother. The Lord support and bless her with his favour and strength!

“I am your affectionate son,
“R. WATSON.”

The venerable sufferer to whom this pious letter was addressed died about a fortnight after, in the seventieth year of his age.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Watson reappointed to Wakefield—Methodist missions—Dr. Coke's labours in the missionary cause—Anecdote—Dr. Coke embarks on a mission to the East Indies—His death—Number of the Wesleyan missionaries at this time—Meetings held and societies formed in various places for their support—Extracts from Mr. Watson's missionary sermon at Leeds—Anecdotes of the mission in the West Indies—Extract from Mr. Watson's speech at the Halifax meeting—Anecdote related by him at the missionary meeting in Sheffield—Extracts from speeches from Mr. Montgomery—Increase of interest awakened on the subject of missions—Notice of Mr. Watson's exertion in their behalf.

AT the conference of 1813 Mr. Watson was reappointed to the Wakefield circuit. It was during the second year of his ministry in this place that he was providentially led to engage in a work to which a large portion of his subsequent life was devoted; we allude to the glorious enterprise of sending the gospel to the heathen.

Previous to this time the Methodist missions were chiefly confined to the West Indies, and the British dominions in North America, where they had been in successful operation for many years. These missions had been principally established through the instrumentality of the Rev. Dr. Coke; and after the death of Mr. Wesley they were committed entirely to his superintendence and direction. To their extension

and support, his time and talents, his fortune and his life, were alike devoted. He kept up a regular correspondence with the missionaries, giving counsel and encouragement as their cases might require. He travelled through the country making collections in the congregations for their support; solicited subscriptions from wealthy individuals wherever he could gain access; and stooped to the very drudgery of charity by gratuitously pleading the cause of a perishing world from door to door.* For

* The doctor's gentlemanly manners, polite address, and untiring perseverance, together with the earnest simplicity with which he related the subject of his errand, rendered him remarkably successful in collecting money in this way; and though he sometimes received a rude and ungracious refusal, yet at other times his applications were successful where his friends anticipated nothing but repulsive insult. A singular instance of this occurred at a place called Stonehouse, near Plymouth. "Calling one day on a captain of a man-of-war, who resided there, he introduced the case of the West India negroes in such an affecting manner, as to prevail upon him to give him a sum much larger than he expected. This he gratefully received and retired. The captain, who knew nothing of Dr. Coke, happened, in the course of the day, to call on a gentleman who had long resided in the place, and to whom Dr. Coke had frequently made successful applications. After conversing together for some time—'Pray sir,' said the captain, 'do you know any thing of a little fellow who

nearly thirty years did this indefatigable servant of God give himself up to this benevolent enterprise. For its advancement he expended thousands of pounds from his own private property; and by his rare and almost unparalleled labours, and those connected with him in the work, many thousands of souls were brought to the knowledge of God.

At the conference of 1813 Dr. Coke, who had long entertained an ardent desire to establish a mission in the East Indies, expressed his anxious wish to be allowed to proceed thither for that purpose; and at the same time introduced to the conference seven young men whom he had engaged to accompany him, and share in his toils. It was in vain that his brethren, in view of his advanced age, (he was then sixty-seven,) the difficulties of the undertaking, and the serious inconveniences which the existing missions would experience in consequence of his absence, attempted to dissuade him from the enterprise. He heard their rea-

calls himself Dr. Coke, and who is going about begging money for missionaries to be sent among the slaves?' 'I know him well,' was the reply. 'He seems,' rejoined the captain, 'to be a heavenly minded little d—l. He coaxed me out of two guineas this morning.'"—*Drew's Life of Coke.*

sonings and remonstrances, and then, bursting into tears, he exclaimed, in a manner which they could not resist, "If you will not let me go, you will break my heart." To obviate any objections on account of the expense which the mission would involve, he generously offered to bear, from his own private purse, the whole cost of the outfit, to the amount of six thousand pounds sterling, if that sum should be thought necessary.

His brethren at length withdrew their opposition, and in December, 1813, the doctor, accompanied by James Lynch, William Ault, George Erskine, William M. Harvard, Thomas Squance, Benjamin Clough, and John M'Kenney, embarked for his new field of labour; but before the vessel reached its destination, he was suddenly called to his eternal reward.*

* The mission to the East was not abandoned when the spirit of Dr. Coke fled to paradise, and his remains were committed to the great deep. His companions, though young and inexperienced, proceeded on their voyage to Ceylon, where they commenced a mission, which has already exerted a powerful influence upon that island. It has also long since been extended to the continent of India, and rises every year in interest and importance.—*Jackson's Centenary*. There are at the present time twenty-two Wesleyan missionaries in Ceylon, and twenty in continental India.

The Methodists had at this period sixty missionaries employed on foreign stations and among the Roman Catholics in Ireland, besides those who were now appointed to the East; and it now became necessary to devise some measures for their future support. Hitherto the connection had relied almost entirely upon the personal efforts of Dr. Coke, both in directing the operations of the missions, and in providing the means whereby they might be sustained; and now that he was about to leave the country, many persons entertained great anxiety respecting their future prosperity. Strange as it may appear, however, the cause was greatly advanced in consequence of the doctor's departure; for when they could no longer depend upon his exertions, the preachers and people awoke from their state of inaction; they perceived that a responsibility rested upon them which they had not previously felt; and that it was needful for them to make a strenuous and united effort to maintain the missions which were already formed, and commence others which were greatly needed, and in many places loudly called for.

By some other denominations, the plan of organized societies, which should employ collectors in raising weekly, monthly, quarterly,

and annual subscriptions, had been successfully tried; and it was believed by several preachers and other friends in the western parts of Yorkshire, that this method of raising funds for the missions might be adopted with good effects by the Methodists at the present crisis. It was therefore resolved that a meeting should be held at Leeds, for the purpose of forming a "Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District;" and Messrs. Buckley and Watson were requested to preach preparatory sermons. With this request Mr. Watson complied, though not without some reluctance; for the plan was new among the Methodists, and as he had been so recently received into the connection, he feared that if he took so prominent a part in the proceedings, he might be suspected by some of a desire to introduce novelties into the society. His objections, however, were overruled, and on the morning of Wednesday, October the 6th, he delivered an eloquent and impressive discourse from a part of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones:—"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," Ezek. xxxvii, 9.

In the course of his remarks he clearly refuted the unscriptural notion that the heathen, in consequence of their ignorance of divine re-

velation, were in a state of spiritual safety. While he admitted that it was possible for heathens to be saved, he contended that this very possibility proved the actual danger of their state, as it showed them to be the subjects of moral government, and consequently liable to punishment in case of disobedience. This solemn question, he observed, had been decided by revelation itself. The reasoning of St. Paul in Romans i, ii, is as applicable to the heathen of our day, as it was to those of the apostle's day. "*His* conclusion is, that for all their crimes and idolatries 'they are without excuse.' They are ignorant, but it is because they 'do not like to retain God in their knowledge.' They have a 'law written on their hearts;' but they violate it. They have a 'conscience' which 'accuses or excuses' them; but they disregard it, and 'therefore they are without excuse.' This is the conclusion of an infallible teacher, against whom it is vain to reason. The heathen world then are under the wrath and curse of Almighty God. The law which they have violated turns the edge of the sword of justice against them; the conscience which they have abused renders them miserable in their crimes; and as death expels their myriads from this state of being, they appear before that

God of judgment who hath said, 'The abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'

"Were these solemn truths well fixed in our minds, they would stand in the place of a volume of argument to induce us to support missionary institutions. They would burst at once the bands of selfishness, and 'draw out our souls' to them who are perishing for lack of knowledge. The contemplation of the imminent danger of so great a portion of our fellow men would melt at once the frigidness of our natures, and cause our affections to flow forth in strong prayers, and still stronger exertions, in behalf of our brethren in distant lands, who have 'forgotten the God of their salvation, and have not been mindful of the rock of their strength.'"

Having pointed out the means by which the heathen world is to be restored to the image and favour of God, the preacher directed the attention of his hearers to the good effects which had already followed the use of the appointed means, and to the glorious promises of the ultimate and universal spread of the gospel.

He then concluded his discourse with the following eloquent appeal:—

“If, then, so glorious a certainty of present partial success, and of ultimate complete success, be established, what remains but that we apply to the great work of sending the blessed gospel to the heathen with the utmost zeal? *Duty demands it.* We owe a debt of love to every man. God hath ‘blessed us that we may be a blessing.’ *Sympathy demands it.* ‘Now we are converted, let us strengthen our brethren.’ *Interest demands it.* ‘He that watereth shall be watered himself.’ *Our hatred of sin demands it.* Let us haste to banish from the earth those abominations which offend the pure eyes of heaven. *Pity to souls demands it.* Shall myriads of immortal spirits sink into the gulf of perdition without an effort on our part to save them? Lastly; *gratitude to God for past success demands it.* God has blessed our missions with great and distinguished success. The prophets have prophesied, and the bones have been shaken; the breath of God has entered them, and already they stand up by their thousands. God be praised! If you faint not, if, in common with your brethren throughout the Christian world, you still prosecute the good work, they shall be increased to ‘an exceeding

great army.' If, in the earnest fervour of your spirits, you pray, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live,' the whole valley shall soon heave with returning life. The holy influence shall sweep the desolate earth, and in every land the 'dry bones' shall stand up, 'the living, the living to praise God, as we do this day.' Amen."

On the afternoon of the day on which this discourse was delivered, the first Methodist missionary meeting was held in one of the Methodist chapels at Leeds. It was numerously attended, and was addressed by the Rev. Messrs. Jabez Bunting, James Wood, William Warrener, Thomas Jackson, Mr. William Dawson, and several other ministers and laymen. Mr. Warrener, who was one of the first missionaries employed among the negroes in the West Indies, gave an interesting account of the mission in those islands, and related some pleasing anecdotes, exhibiting the beneficial effects which had resulted from them. One or two of these we will here insert.

"A negress, named Judy Athol, went to hear the preaching, because, as she expressed herself, 'odder negers go.' The word reached her heart. She instantly parted with all her

jewels, fine muslins, and lace, and never desired them again. She entertained the preachers many years at her house, and truly adorned her Christian profession. Such was the confidence reposed in her, on account of her exemplary character, that the lady on whose estate she lived, requested her to become her housekeeper. But Judy declined the offer, alleging as a reason that she could not then entertain the preachers, nor attend so constantly the means of grace. After I had been some time on the island, Judy was taken ill. When her last moments were at hand, she sent a request that I would visit her in her affliction. Being introduced to the dying saint, I said, ‘Now, Judy, you have often told us how good Jesus has been to you. You were then in health, but now you are dying, how is it with you now?’ Pausing a few minutes, she replied, ‘O, massa ! my Massa Jesus always been good since I knew him ; but now I dying, it all glory, glory.’ In such triumph died Judy Athol.”

“On the estate of a Mr. G. some pious negroes resided, who repaired to the means of grace whenever they could go without detection. Mr. G. being about to sail for England, his manager was heard to say before his departure, ‘Mr. G. is going to England ; I will then

soon put an end to all this praying among the negroes.' One day, soon afterward, Mr. G. was walking between two cane pieces, when he saw some ripe peas wasting; on which he said to his watchman, who was near, 'Why do you not gather these peas?' 'O massa,' said he, 'they no my peas.' 'Not your peas,' said Mr. G., 'you rogue, do not you all take peas, or any thing else which you can get?' 'O, massa,' rejoined the watchman, 'we negers, who go to prayer, never teeve.' Mr. G. said, 'What do you say? that you negroes, who go to prayer, are not thieves?' His reply was, 'O no, massa.' Mr. G., as he walked to his house, said within himself, 'What have we been doing not to encourage the negroes to attend preaching?' He then called his boy, and said, 'Go tell Mr. —, the manager, to address a note in my name to the missionary, and to inform him that he is welcome to preach on my estate at any time.' Thus was a wicked design frustrated; and, the good hand of God being with us, we erected a chapel on this very estate, worth £400 currency."

At this meeting resolutions were passed, requesting Mr. Watson to publish the sermon*

* It will be found in the first volume of Mr. Watson's sermons, published at the Methodist Book Concern.

he had preached in the morning ; and also to prepare an address to the friends of the Methodist missions, and to the Christian public in general, giving information respecting the missions, and setting forth their claims to the support of all who wished well to religion and mankind. With both of these requests Mr Watson complied.

The interest awakened in behalf of the missionary cause by the sermons and addresses on this occasion was very great ; and similar meetings were soon after held at Halifax, Wakefield, Hull, and Sheffield, at all of which Mr. Watson attended, and took an active part in the services. In his speech at the Halifax meeting, referring to a common excuse for not contributing to the support of foreign missions, he said :—

“ In opposition to such efforts as have been this day recommended, I can anticipate but one objection from any person bearing the name of a Christian. It is, that charity begins at home. I will not dispute the sentiment : it is entitled to some respect. It has passed into a proverb ; and bears the aspect of hoary venerableness. It is a neat pocket edition of selfishness, and very convenient to the wearer. I should be very sorry to deprive him of it ; and shall there-

fore only observe, that our purposes and plans are not inconsistent with this principle ; and that, in a word, charity to the heathen is charity begun at home. This is not difficult to prove. We cannot take a step toward evangelizing the heathen without entering into many inquiries as to the extent of their moral wretchedness ; and such inquiries are eminently useful to ourselves. In our present state we are seldom brought to value our own blessings, but by their loss, or by comparing our condition with that of others. By the loss of our religious privileges, I hope we shall never learn their value. But if, by comparing our light with the darkness of the heathen, our riches with their poverty, we learn to prize these blessings more, and to use them better ; then, sir, missionary efforts will prove a blessing to us, to our societies, to our country ; and charity to the heathen will be charity begun at home."

At the meeting in Sheffield he related the following anecdote of an aged and pious female, who, having heard of the new thing in Methodism which was then so much talked of in the western part of Yorkshire, was anxious to have a hand in it herself, and to contribute out of her poverty something toward sending the gospel to the heathen :—" A woman at Wakefield.

well known to be in very needy circumstances, came and offered to subscribe a penny a week to the missionary fund there. It was immediately said to her, ‘Surely *you* are too poor to afford it.’ She replied, ‘I spin so many hanks of yarn a week for a living ; I will spin *one more*, and that will be a penny for the society.’” “I would rather,” said Mr. Watson, “see that hank suspended in the poor woman’s cottage, a token of her zeal for the triumph of the gospel, than military trophies in the halls of heroes. In them I should only see the proud memorials of victories obtained over the physical strength of man ; but in the other I behold the triumph of a generous religion over the natural selfishness of the human heart.”

The poet Montgomery was one of the speakers at the Sheffield meeting,* and heard Mr.

* We cannot forbear inserting the following beautiful passage from Mr. Montgomery’s speech on this occasion : —“In the Bible Society all names and distinctions of sects are blended till they are lost, like the prismatic colours in a ray of pure and perfect light ;—in the missionary work, though divided, they are not discordant ; but like the same colours, displayed and harmonized in the rainbow, they form an arch of glory ascending on the one hand from earth to heaven, and on the other descending from heaven to earth,—a bow of promise, a covenant of peace, a sign that the storm of wrath is passing away, and the Sun of right-

Watson relate this anecdote. Referring to it at a missionary meeting held in the same place twenty years after, he said,—“ I have Mr. Watson in my eye at this moment. The picture is perfect in my remembrance, as he stood on the bench before me : while realizing the scene, as though we had all been with him in the widow’s cottage, he pointed to the single hank, suspended from a rafter of the ceiling. I can never forget his attitude nor his look. ‘ She hath done what she could,’ was the feeling of every one of his audience ; and while the eloquent advocate expatiated on the value of such an offering, made in singleness of heart to the Lord, neither he nor his hearers, nor the humble contributor herself, were at that time aware of its value in influence as an example of what others in imitation would be stirred up to do in the same way ; for I believe this was the first precedent of innumerable instances in which the poorest, the weakest, and the meanest in outward respects, have taxed their ingenuity as well as their industry to find out means whereby they could aid the same blessed cause. Indeed, these devices have been so frequently

eousness, with healing in his wings, breaking forth on all nations.” Mr. Montgomery is a member of the Moravian Church, and a man of a truly Christian and catholic spirit.

and so successfully practised,—each in turn operating as an incentive and an encouragement to others,—that, even in a pecuniary sense, the poor widow's two mites may have produced a talent of gold to the missionary funds."

Missionary meetings were shortly after held, and societies formed in many other places, at several of which Mr. Watson, in conjunction with his friend Mr. Bunting, rendered very efficient aid.

At the ensuing conference, which met at Bristol in July, 1814, the missionary meetings which had been held in the course of the year became a subject of discussion. After an explanation of their character was given, and the arguments for and against them were heard, the conference adopted, almost unanimously, the following resolutions:—

"We strongly recommend the immediate establishment of a Methodist missionary society in every district in the kingdom, (in which it has not been already accomplished,) on the general plan of those societies which have been formed in Yorkshire and elsewhere during the past year.

"The thanks of the conference are given to those of our preachers in the Leeds, Halifax,

York, Sheffield, Cornwall, and Newcastle districts, who have been concerned in the formation of Methodist missionary societies ; and to all the members and friends of the said societies, for the very liberal and zealous support which they have afforded us in this important department of the work of God."

A new and mighty impulse was thus given to the missionary work throughout the connection. The sacred flame continued to spread, and missionary societies were formed in all the districts in the kingdom ; these were followed by branch societies in the several circuits ; by associations connected with the different chapels ; by juvenile societies, and ladies' associations. The hearts of the people were everywhere impressed, and their sympathies and prayers called forth by the state of the heathen, and the communication of authentic missionary intelligence ; collectors offered their services in every direction, and money was from year to year poured into the sacred treasury, beyond all former example ; in consequence of which, new missions have been established, old ones reinforced, tens of thousands of heathen children instructed in the truths of Christianity, and many wretched savages and idolaters civilized, converted, and saved.

The career of honourable labour in behalf of missions, which Mr. Watson had now commenced, ended only with his life, and to their present prosperity his exertions largely contributed. He pleaded the sacred cause from the pulpit, the platform, and the press, with a force of argument, a beauty of illustration, a sublimity of thought, and a power of persuasion which, perhaps, no man, whether speaker or writer, ever surpassed. In union with his brethren, he directed the practical working of the mission system with a sound judgment, and patient, persevering zeal. All his abilities were brought to bear upon this work; and for a series of years he, more than any other individual, supplied the place of the lamented Dr. Coke.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Watson's ministry at Wakefield—His attention to children and young persons—Reproof to an impatient hearer—Appointed to the Hull circuit—Dedication of a new chapel—Mr. Watson's usefulness—Indications of declining health—Providential deliverance—Letter to Mr. Walton—Tale of robbery—Visits London to assist at a missionary anniversary—Preaches in the City-Road chapel—Removal to London—Appointed one of the secretaries to the missions—Amount of his official duties—Letter to Mr Garbutt.

MR. WATSON'S ministry did not at first, except among the more intelligent and discerning members of the several congregations, attract that attention in the Wakefield circuit which might have been expected, and which it so justly deserved. His hearers generally, however, learned to appreciate him on further acquaintance ; and his preaching became increasingly acceptable up to the time of his removal. But what was far more gratifying to him than the admiration of his friends, was the assurance that his "labours were not in vain in the Lord." Many individuals were, through his instrumentality, converted "from the error of their way," and brought into the church ; and some of the most pious and exemplary members of the Methodist society in Wakefield at this day acknowledge him as their father in the Lord.

To young people of intelligence, belonging to religious families, he was rendered specially useful. He conversed with them respecting their reading; and introduced them to different branches of study and knowledge, particularly astronomy and botany. He pointed out to them the traces of wisdom and design which are observable in all the arrangements of the vegetable kingdom; and he taught them to sanctify every pursuit and employment by the word of God and prayer. To many families he was a frequent and welcome visitant. He sympathized with them in their trials and afflictions; and his cheerful spirit and intelligent conversation were to them a perpetual source of hallowed joy and instruction.

In all his pastoral visitations, children were special objects of his kind attention. He regarded them as the lambs of the flock of Christ, and the hope of the church. He sometimes wrote pithy sentences in their books, and presented to them little curiosities; and he occasionally mingled with their amusements, for the purpose of obtaining their confidence, and more effectually to promote their spiritual and moral benefit. This interesting feature in Mr. Watson's character became increasingly prominent as he advanced in life; and it might truly be

said of him, in the language of Mr. Montgomery,—

“Children were his delight ; they ran to meet
His soothing hand, and clasp his honour'd feet ;
While, 'midst their fearless sports, supremely blest,
He grew in heart a child among the rest.”

It is scarcely needful to add, that by the Methodist society at Wakefield Mr. Watson was universally esteemed and beloved ; and that when in the course of his itinerancy he was called to remove from them, his departure occasioned a general and sincere regret. Mr. Jackson, who succeeded him in that circuit, observes, that the people were continually referring in their conversation to Mr. Watson's character and ministry ; and the emotion with which they often spoke, showed the deep impression which his sermons and conduct had made upon their minds. With some families Mr. Watson had been specially intimate ; and their admiration of his character and attachment to his person were unbounded, and continued without abatement to the end of his life.

The following incident, which occurred in his ministry at Wakefield, will show with what readiness and effect he could administer reproof when he deemed it necessary. One Sun-

day morning, soon after the commencement of his discourse, a man in a pew just before him rose from his seat, and turned round to look at the clock in the front of the gallery, as if the service were a weariness to him, and he wished to give the preacher a hint to bring it to a speedy conclusion. Mr. Watson observed the unseemly act, and said, in a very significant manner, "A remarkable change has taken place among the people of this country in regard to the public services of religion. Our forefathers put their clocks on the outside of their places of worship, that they might not be too late in their attendance. We have transferred them to the inside of the house of God, lest we should stay too long in his service. A sad and an ominous change!" Then, addressing the man whose rude behaviour had occasioned the remark, he said, "You need be under no alarm this morning: I shall not keep you beyond the usual time."

Mr. Watson's next removal was to the Hull circuit, where, as he informs us, he spent "two of the happiest years of his life." Methodism had been established in Hull for more than fifty years; and there was now a numerous and respectable society, with three moderately-sized chapels, and a fourth, of much larger dimen-

sions, in course of erection. The new chapel, which was dedicated soon after Mr. Watson's arrival, was a noble edifice, ninety-four feet in length, and eighty-four in breadth, including the wings, in which were the gallery stairs. It was calculated to seat upward of two thousand people, and when the pews and aisles were crowded, it would hold more than three thousand. The dedication services took place on Friday and Sunday, October 7th and 9th, 1814, when sermons were preached by the Rev. Messrs. Bunting, Watson, Newton, and Burdsall. The occasion was one of great interest, and all the services were well attended, especially on the Sunday evening, when it was thought upward of four thousand persons crowded into the new chapel. Many hundreds were unable to obtain admission; and these, with the congregations in the other chapels, which were open at the same time, amounted, it was believed, to upward of eight thousand persons, who on that memorable evening left their homes to attend the worship of God among the Methodists at Hull. Immediately after the dedication of this house of prayer, every setting was let;* and a

* Among the British Wesleyan Methodists it is the universal practice to rent the pews or slips in their chapels; reserving, however, a sufficient number of free seats for the

large and respectable congregation regularly attended its services, both on the Sunday, and on the week-day evenings. To this result the ministry of Mr. Watson greatly contributed; and many families, previously unacquainted with Methodism, became, principally through his instrumentality, permanent attendants at the new place of worship.

At no period of his life does Mr. Watson's ministry appear to have been more powerful, or to have made a greater impression upon the public mind. His sermons, marked by a force of reasoning and a persuasiveness almost peculiar to himself, embodying the great truths of the gospel, and delivered with earnestness and feeling, were the means of reclaiming many a wanderer from God, of administering comfort to many a broken heart; and of stimulating believers to "go on to perfection." One Monday evening, when he was preaching in the new chapel, an unusual power attended the word, and many persons wept aloud. At the close of the public service he retired into the vestry, where many of the congregation followed him, inquiring, "What must we do to be saved?"

accommodation of the poor, and for strangers. The new chapel at Hull contained free seats for eight hundred persons.

The cries of those who were convinced of sin were loud and piercing. For a moment he seemed to be stunned, and asked one of the class leaders, who was standing by, "What shall we do, brother?" "Let us pray to Him who can save," was the answer. Without uttering another word, he kneeled down by the side of the penitents, and continued to intercede with God in their behalf, pointing them at intervals to the sacrifice of Christ, and encouraging them to put their trust in him, till three of them were enabled to rejoice in the pardoning mercy of God. Several whole families, by means of his preaching, were brought under religious impressions, and many individuals were induced to become regular hearers at the various chapels, who were previously accustomed to spend the sabbath in seeking worldly pleasure.

His usefulness at Hull was not to be estimated by the number of actual conversions which were known to be effected through his instrumentality. The influence of his ministry was felt in many quarters, where it was never acknowledged; and it operated in a thousand ways which cannot now be traced. Almost every person in the town, who made any profession of religion, heard him at one time or

another. Even his week-night congregations in the principal chapels were unusually large ; frequently amounting to eight hundred or a thousand people. As a preacher he probably never surpassed what he was in those days. His sermons were closely studied ; and having then greater bodily vigour than he possessed in the later years of his life, they were delivered with an energy which increased the interest they were so well calculated to produce.

The Rev. William Naylor, who was one of Mr. Watson's colleagues at this time, observes, —“ There is reason to believe that the disease which terminated his life, existed, if it had not its commencement, during his residence in the Hull circuit. He complained of a pain in his side. This was so severe, that he could not bear the exercise of riding on horseback, which was our usual mode of conveyance to the distant places in the circuit. He was exceedingly punctual in attending his appointments ; and therefore performed many long journeys on foot, even in the middle of winter, and upon very indifferent roads ; for he could not endure the thought of a Methodist preacher neglecting a congregation, when he was expected ; and he felt very keenly if any one supposed him capable of doing so from indifference.”

In one of these pedestrian excursions, Mr. Watson narrowly escaped with his life. For several years the preachers in the Hull circuit had been in the habit of visiting, on the week-day evenings, a small village called Marfleet, where they had a society and congregation. The road to this place being rather circuitous, foot passengers were accustomed to shorten the distance by walking across the fields, which are surrounded by deep drains, over which some narrow planks formed the only bridges. When returning from this place one stormy winter's night, Mr. Watson missed the path, and wandered about for some hours, exposed to the storm, and in no small danger of perishing in the drains, which were then filled with water. As the night advanced, his family and friends became alarmed; and Mr. John Thompson, at whose house he was expected to sup on his way home, set out with a lantern in quest of him. Mr. Watson, in a state of great exhaustion, saw the light approach; and believing it to be the sign of his deliverance, sent in answer to his prayer, stood still till he was able to hail its friendly bearer, who was overjoyed to find that he was the honoured means of saving so valuable a life. Mr. Watson, who was completely bewildered when Mr. Thomp-

son appeared, always regarded this deliverance as the result of a providential interposition.

The following letter was addressed, in December, 1814, to a valued friend at Wakefield, whom, it appears, Mr. Watson had received an invitation to visit on his way to a meeting which was to have been held at Manchester, but which was postponed. It contains some painful notices of the delicacy of his health, and the consequent pain and languor under which he performed those labours which excited so much attention, and by which multitudes of people were so greatly benefited.

To Mr. William Walton.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have received a kind intimation of your wish that I would not omit paying you a visit, as proposed before the Manchester meeting was postponed. Now certainly I do not require much pressing to visit Wakefield, which, you know, is a very favourite place; and especially your house, which is still more so. I am obliged to visit Manchester on some private business; and had intended to go directly through by the mail from Hull; but, as I hear you are indisposed, and it is a charity to visit the sick; and, secondly, as you have repeated the invitation; and, thirdly, as I am

myself unwell, and shall be glad of a day or two of relaxation, for I am truly worked down ; I will do myself what I assure you will be a very great pleasure,—I will, all being well, and if it please God, be with you on Monday, the 2d of January ; I propose going on Monday morning, by the Sheffield coach, as far as Rawcliffe, whence I can get a conveyance to Pontefract. Now, as I am not in good walking condition, if I could so far trespass on your goodness as to send the gig for me there, about twelve o'clock, I should be with you early in the afternoon. The gig might meet me at the same inn, in Pontefract, where we once took a lunch, in one of our botanical excursions ; for you have not, I suppose, forgotten rambling among the hedges and ditches for good specimens. If this should not be convenient, it is no matter. I can either walk from Pontefract, or get some conveyance. Do not put yourself to any inconvenience whatever.

“I am truly sorry to hear that you have had another of your winter attacks. I too have been an invalid for more than a month ; though I have continued in my work. May we consider these as the kind corrections of the Father who loves us, and is still, both in the

cloud and the sunshine, carrying on his purposes of mercy!

“I find you have a tale of my being robbed, and getting £150 by it. Truly I should have no objection to be robbed in such a way; but there are no such golden showers for me, who seldom profited much by the doctrine of chances. The fact is, we have had the same tale current here respecting Mr. Atmore, at Halifax, with this difference,—that in the change of coats, he got £600; and I, always behind you see, only £150. I have seldom any thing to be robbed of, but my life; and no man can take away that till He pleases who gave it. This neighbourhood is, however, greatly infested by desperadoes.

“This will reach you about the new year. May it be a year of the greatest happiness, peace, usefulness, and improvement to you all! Wishing you every blessing of time and eternity, I must leave off and fall to work. I have three occasional sermons to preach before I see you; one on Saturday, one on Sunday afternoon, and one on Sunday evening; besides my regular work in the town and neighbourhood. The friends here are most unmerciful folks; but I will shake them off at four

o'clock on Monday morning, when the coach leaves.

"Thursday noon."

The tale of robbery, upon which Mr. Watson here descants in his humorous manner, and which was then extensively current, was, that in returning to Hull late in the evening, after preaching in a neighbouring village, he was met by a highwayman, who, after taking from him his money and his watch, demanded his coat, giving him his own, which was old and shabby, in exchange; and that Mr. Watson, on his arrival at home, found in the pocket of this worthless garment the sum of £150. This, however, proved, like many other marvellous reports, to be only an ingenious fabrication.

The fame of Mr. Watson's extraordinary abilities as a preacher, and especially as a preacher on public occasions, was now circulated far and wide. It was no uncommon thing for persons to visit Hull from distant places in Lincolnshire, in order to have the gratification of hearing him; and he received numberless applications from various parts of the country to preach at the opening of new chapels, to plead the cause of sabbath schools, and to as-

sist at the formation and anniversaries of missionary societies.

In the spring of 1816 he was requested by the brethren in London to deliver a discourse at the anniversary of their district missionary society ; and in compliance with their request he preached at the City-Road chapel on the morning of the 25th of April. His sermons and speeches on similar occasions had awakened so much attention, that not only was a large congregation assembled at the appointed time, full of eager expectation, but nearly the whole of the front gallery was occupied by ministers of various denominations. Mr. Watson felt the importance and responsibility of his situation, and experienced no ordinary degree of trepidation in contemplating the task which was allotted him. He paced the vestry of the chapel in a state of considerable agitation ; and when he was informed that the time for commencing the service had arrived, he said, with an expression of strong emotion, " Seasons of this kind require strong nerves, and great assistance from above." That assistance he received in an eminent degree. God was with him. His whole appearance bespoke the solemnity, the humility, the confidence of one who was charged with a message from God ; and the overpower-

ing feeling which pervaded the congregation was not less hallowing than it was delightful. The subject of the sermon was the mediatorial government of Christ viewed in connection with the universal diffusion and final spread of Christianity, and was founded on 1 Cor. xv, 25 :—“ *He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*” The sermon itself was a master-piece of eloquence in that peculiar style for which he was so remarkable ; and was altogether one of his happiest and most successful efforts. It is scarcely possible to conceive of argumentation more lucid and powerful, sentiments more sublime and impressive, imagery more varied and beautiful, and diction more rich and appropriate, than those by which it was characterized. As he entered into the subject his heart became deeply impressed with its truth and importance ; his countenance expanded ; and the effect upon the congregation was irresistible. Much had been expected from him ;—

“ Yet when at length the clear and mellow base
Of his deep voice brake forth, and he let fall
His chosen words like flakes of feather'd snow ;”

and when every successive topic which he introduced rose in interest and grandeur, a breathless silence pervaded the whole assembly ; the

people appeared to be all but their attention dead ; the powers of the preacher were forgotten in the magnitude and sublimity of the theme ; and when the protracted service concluded, the congregation seemed as though listening still, and wrapt up into those vast and magnificent conceptions which the preacher had presented to their delighted attention.

In the evening of the day on which this sermon was preached, the public missionary meeting was held, at which Dr. Adam Clarke presided. Mr. Watson delivered an admirable speech, in which he took a brief survey of the Wesleyan Methodist missions in various parts of the world, and bespoke the liberality of the people in their behalf. "The smallest contributions," he observed, "assist in the good work. A shilling may carry a missionary a mile ; and by travelling that mile he may be a means of the conversion and salvation of an immortal soul."

The interest which Mr. Watson felt in the subject of missions was such that he never hesitated, so far as his health and the claims of his circuit would allow, to comply with the numerous and pressing invitations which he received to visit different parts of the country and advocate the good cause. Wherever he

went his sermons and speeches left a most salutary impression upon the multitudes who were drawn together by the attraction of his name. He taught them the value of Christianity, as the medicine of life, and the sovereign remedy of human misery ; and at the same time he so forcibly stated the obligations of the church to send the gospel to those who were perishing "for lack of knowledge," as to awaken in many persons an increased attention to their own spiritual interests ; while the mission funds were augmented in every place where he pleaded the cause of the heathen.

In the midst of all this popularity, his temper was highly devout and spiritual ; he was often deeply humbled before God ; and his mind was not unfrequently exercised by painful temptations. Sometimes it was with him a matter of extreme difficulty to find suitable subjects upon which to preach in the course of his ordinary ministry ; and he was often considerably agitated, even before the congregations which he was accustomed to address. Once, in the Waltham-street chapel in Hull, his feelings were so excited, that he could not recollect the place where his text was to be found ; and he was compelled to repeat the words without being able to specify the chapter and the verse

At another time, before the same congregation, he pronounced the benediction when he should have repeated the Lord's prayer.

At the conference of 1816 Mr. Watson was stationed in the London east circuit; and at the same time he was also appointed one of the secretaries to the Methodist missions, an office for which he was eminently qualified, and which he retained to the end of his life.

The duties of his secretaryship, added to those of his circuit, which was a large and extensive one, fully occupied the whole of his time. Writing, soon after his settlement in London, to one of his friends at Hull, after intimating that he had as yet formed but few friendships in the metropolis, he observes,—“ I have indeed no time for friendships here. From morning till night I am in duty; and at night am sometimes so weary, that they would be most interesting friends indeed (some such as I *have* known) who would keep me awake. I have had, upon the whole, pleasure in my public labours; and much of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, along with active engagements.”

An extract from another letter, written about the same time, will furnish some idea of the amount of labour he had to perform:—

“ *To Mr. Robert Garbutt, Merchant, Hull.*

“ *St. George's East, Nov. 4th, 1816.*

“MY DEAR FRIEND, — Should I apologize for not writing sooner, I might fill my paper with various reasons, some personal, some public, some philosophical, and others not at all so ; let me then sum up the whole of them in one *negative* : it has not been for want of affection. The remembrance of my Hull friends will ever be dear to me ; and I never think of you without associations of mingled regret and pleasure.

“As self is always so near at hand, and is a subject never difficult to speak of, I may begin by saying that, as to *myself*, I have not been upon the whole so well in health as I was at Hull ; though I hope I have had my seasoning, and I begin to go through my work with more vigour. The mere circuit labour is not, I think, more than at Hull ; but our extra work is greater, and the walking is formidable. I have, for instance, to go regularly every day to the mission office, in the City-Road, about two miles from my house, and return to dinner. Then I have my evening walk to preach, sometimes two or three miles more. To this are to be added all the supernumerary walks which busi-

ness or curiosity may call for. How much time I have for study and reading you may then guess ; and indeed I have been obliged to turn the streets of London into a study ; and sometimes fall into a reverie, at the hazard of being upset by a porter, or dashed on the pavement by some fiery charioteer.

“ You will see advertised on the November Magazine, that the pocket book would contain my portrait ; but I neglected to sit in time, and so it could not be engraved. This arises from my indifference to *such honours*.

“ In the midst of general distress I fear Hull still supplies its share.

“ May all these sufferings teach us that remedies for national distress are only to be found in national amendment ; and that righteousness alone exalteth a nation ! May we, my dear friend, be more intent on the prize of our high calling ! There are blessings which never cheat us ; there is a good we can command ; there is a peace ever flowing, and never exhausted. We are indeed living for eternity, and that is at hand ! Let us trim our lamps anew, and pour their lustre on all around us.”

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Watson's duties as missionary secretary—Extracts from his first Annual Report of the missions—Mr. Marsden's account of Mr. Watson at this time—Attacks upon the Wesleyan missions to the slaves in the West Indies—Mr. Watson publishes a pamphlet in their defence—Influence of missions on slavery—Dedication of Queen-street chapel—Missionary Report for 1817—Mr. Watson publishes a Defence of the Doctrine of the Eternal Sonship—Prepares a plan for a General Wesleyan Missionary Society—Appointed to the London west circuit—Preaches before the Sunday School Union—Writes the first Annual Pastoral Address of the Conference to the Societies.

MR. WATSON'S colleague in the missionary secretaryship during this and the following year was the Rev. George Marsden, who conducted the foreign correspondence, while Mr. Watson undertook the home department. It devolved upon the latter, therefore, to prepare the annual report of the state of the missions, all the periodical publications, the official correspondence with the government, and every thing that it might be requisite to publish in relation to the missions.

The first general report of the missions which it fell to Mr. Watson's lot to draw up was published in the latter part of the year 1816. The facts which it presented were of the most cheering kind. Through the blessing

of God, the missions had prospered abroad ; and the pecuniary supplies for their support and enlargement, raised by the pious liberality of the friends at home, had greatly increased. Nineteen additional missionaries had, in the course of the year, been sent to different parts of the world ; making the whole number of missionaries employed on *foreign* stations, under the direction of the Methodist Conference, EIGHTY.

A few short extracts from this " Report," which was written almost immediately after Mr. Watson's official connection with the missions, will serve to show the spirit in which he entered upon his work, and the eloquent and forcible character of his appeals to those by whom the cause was supported.

" The committee have to congratulate the subscribers in general on the increase of the funds.* The receipts of the year have more than equalled the large expenditure, besides the payment of large arrears. This the committee ascribe, under the blessing of God, to the operation of missionary societies, adult and juvenile, formed in different parts of the kingdom :

* The contributions to the missionary cause amounted this year to about \$50,000, being upward of \$4,000 more than those of any preceding year.

and carried, in some places, with great zeal, into full efficiency. Here the rich and the poor have met together; the aged, and the youth, and the child, have united in the service of Christ, and presented their offerings to his cause; and the committee trust that, wherever it is practicable, the recommendation of the conference of 1814, on this subject, will be adopted, that the supply may be *constant* as the moral necessities of an unsaved world; and *increasing* as, by the providence of God, are the opportunities for communicating to it that only means of salvation, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Increasing, however, as are our exertions, and those of almost every other religious denomination, the committee would still keep it impressed upon the minds of all who have so willingly co-operated with them in these attempts to spread the knowledge of Christ, that little has been done by any body of Christians separately, or by all collectively, in comparison of what remains to be done.

“Immense shades of darkness still remain unpierced by a ray of heavenly light. Empires, composed of hundreds of millions of souls, still remain under the power of Satan; and the worship of idols and devils still robs

‘ God over all, blessed for ever,’ of the worship due to his holy name by his redeemed creatures. While the world presents such an aspect, there is surely enough of wretchedness to keep alive our sympathies, and enough of sin to rouse into vivid operation the feelings of indignant jealousy for the honour of the Lord of hosts. The debt of the Christian world to the heathen remains undischarged. It has run awfully into arrears ; and the favourable opportunities of access to every part of the pagan world are infallible indications that the Governor and Judge of the world, and especially of the churches, now demands its payment. The successes of the missions of modern times are certainly not a discharge from the service, but the strongest incitements to pledge every energy anew to its holy objects. The efficiency of the gospel has been again demonstrated in our own day in the conversion and salvation of heathens of every class, of every clime, and of every form of pagan superstition. Every missionary enterprise, if prudently, and, above all, if piously, undertaken,—if it be consecrated by singleness of view, and supported by prayer,—has a moral certainty of success. Every sign of the time indicates that the period is fully come when the outcasts of men shall be

remembered, and they who are ready to perish shall obtain mercy. Pressing, therefore, as the state of affairs is, the committee are persuaded that the last retrenchment which any person alive to the glory of God, and the salvation of men, will make, whenever obliged to make retrenchment, will be the sums he has devoted, first to the support of religion at home, and, second, to the natural and necessary consequence of the former, the extension of religion abroad. God calls, and his people follow. He who still goes on 'from conquering to conquer,' now more evidently puts himself at the head of his sacramental host. The battle is turned to the gate; and none, it is hoped, will be found treacherous to the grand and momentous struggle, none who will not wield his weapon in the war, or stretch out his hand to replenish the treasury. 'Signs of the Son of man;' signs of glory and conquest, transfuse a new vigour into the heart, and spread new prospects to the hopes of the righteous. 'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth;' the light of the morning, on the tops of the mountains, catches the waiting eyes of those who sit in the shadow of death. The captive exile hastens that he may be delivered. 'The whole creation' of rational creatures, crushed beneath the ac-

cumulated weight of the tyrannizing superstitions of ages, ‘groaneth and travaileth in pain to be delivered from the bondage of corruption.’ All is preparation and movement. ‘The rod of his strength is gone out of Zion,’ and he must ‘reign in the midst of his enemies.’ His ‘people,’ too, are ‘willing in the day of his power;’ and nothing remains to give them their full share in the blessing and glory of that victory, which is to reassert the rights of God to the love and homage of a world of redeemed men, but that they be ‘steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.’ Their labour, directed by his word, and animated by his Spirit, cannot be in vain.”

Mr. Watson was the writer of nearly all the Annual Reports, from this period to the close of his life. His interest in the cause of missions never flagged; and his zeal for their advancement suffered no abatement, until his hands had ceased to labour, and his heart to beat.

“During the two years,” says Mr. Marsden, “in which we acted together as secretaries, and the three following years, in which he continued in the same office, and I had to act as one of the general treasurers, I had frequent opportunities of witnessing his earnest desire

to promote the interests of the Redeemer in the heathen world. Whenever the question of the establishment of a new mission, or the enlargement of one of our old stations, came before the committee, he was always ready to advocate the further extension of the work, whenever there appeared a providential opening, and a probability of success. Though our funds were frequently exhausted, he relied confidently upon the providence of God for those supplies which would be rendered necessary.

“Frequently have I admired the accuracy of his judgment in suggesting the stations to which the temper, habits, talents, and acquirements of missionary candidates were adapted. When six or eight young men have been examined and approved by the committee, after being duly recommended by their respective circuits and district meetings, it has been a question of no ordinary moment, both in regard to themselves, and the work in which they were to be employed, in what particular parts of the mission field they should be respectively appointed to labour. In such cases I have almost invariably found that we might safely rely upon Mr. Watson’s judgment.

“During the five years in which we were associated together in the mission work, and

which frequently required much time and exertion, he never relaxed in regular ministerial labours. He generally attended his appointments in the circuit, both on the Lord's day, and the week-day evenings. All his powers, mental and bodily, were consecrated to the service of God."

In the spring of 1817, Mr. Watson, at the request of the missionary committee, published a defence of the missions to the slaves in the West Indies, against the misrepresentations and calumnies of the planters and others.

These missions were commenced in 1760, under circumstances strikingly providential, and had been carried on with admirable zeal and success, at a vast expense of life and money. Several of the planters were humane men, and encouraged the religious instruction of their slaves; for they found the converted negroes were honest, and from a sense of duty discharged the task allotted them. But others were decidedly hostile to all attempts at negro improvement; with them the spiritual interests of the negro were either the subjects of profane ridicule, or were absolutely forgotten.

The object of the missionaries was purely spiritual. They saw the people perishing in ignorance and sin; and felt themselves bound

to obey the Saviour's command, that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." They taught the negroes Christianity, with reference to the salvation of their souls, having no ulterior design whatever. They united them together in Christian societies; explained to them the necessity, permanence, and sanctity of the marriage tie; united them together in holy matrimony; watched over their religious and moral conduct; and inculcated the duties of contentment, submission, and diligence.

All this, however, was insufficient to allay the apprehensions of those who imagined that their interests were concerned in the continuance of slavery, and who therefore endeavoured to arrest the progress of religious instruction. To accomplish their purpose they subjected the missionaries to every species of annoyance and persecution, hoping by these means to drive them from the islands. Oppressive laws were enacted by the colonial legislatures; the congregations disturbed, and the preachers assaulted, by mobs of the *civilized* inhabitants; while tales of insurrection were continually invented, in which the missionaries were sure to be implicated.

They also endeavoured to excite the odium of the British government and people against the missionaries by representing that, under the cloak of religion, they taught disobedience to masters, and inculcated a spirit of sedition among the slaves. To these, and other charges, which were advanced in the House of Commons, in the public papers, and in pamphlets, Mr. Watson published a reply, under the title of "A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies : including a Refutation of the charges in Mr. Marryatt's 'Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade,' and other Publications ; with Facts and Anecdotes illustrative of the moral state of the Slaves, and of the operation of the Missions." The publication of this pamphlet was a seasonable antidote to the unfounded calumnies against the missionaries in the West Indies, which were then urged with such frequency and vehemence, that they had already begun to make an injurious impression upon the public ; and it afforded the friends of the missions a ground of honest triumph and congratulation. Never was the defence of a righteous cause more complete. The author's piety, eloquence, philanthropy, and powers of argumentation, were all brought to bear upon his subject with admirable effect.

For the publication of this defence of the missions, Mr. Watson, at the next conference, which was held at Sheffield in July and August, 1817, received the unanimous thanks of that body.

In consequence of the rapid increase in the business and operations of the missions, the same conference resolved, “ ‘That suitable premises for a Methodist missionary house and office shall be immediately procured, in some central situation in London, affording sufficient accommodation for the orderly transaction of all our missionary business, and for a depot of proper articles which are wanted in the outfit of missionaries.’ ”

It was also felt that the plan upon which the Methodist missions were conducted was somewhat anomalous. A missionary society was formed in almost every district in the connection ; but there was no general society, which could hold its annual meeting, and to which the proceedings of the executive committee could be regularly reported. The conference, therefore, directed the committee to draw up a plan for a “ General Wesleyan Missionary Society,” which should hold its anniversary in London about the month of May, and to which all the district societies should be considered

auxiliaries. The plan thus formed was to be laid before the next conference for its approval.

Shortly after his return from the conference Mr. Watson was called to preach at the opening of the new chapel in Queen-street. The occasion was one of considerable interest, the chapel being the largest that the Methodists had erected in London since the year 1777, when that in the City-Road was built; and it was more highly ornamented than any other place of worship then occupied by them in the metropolis. The dedication took place on Thursday, September 29th, 1817, when Mr. Benson preached in the morning, Mr. Newton in the afternoon, and Mr. Watson in the evening.

The missionary "Report" for 1817, which was prepared by Mr. Watson, was full of gratifying intelligence. The contributions during the year had amounted to the noble sum of \$81,830. The number of missionaries also had been greatly increased. Six additional ones had been sent to Newfoundland; three to Canada; three to Nova Scotia; eight to the West Indies; one to Sierra Leone; and three to Ceylon.

Not the least interesting item in the "Report," was the fact that missionary societies had been formed on several of the mission sta-

tions. Those who through the instrumentality of missions had received the gospel, felt it their duty to assist in extending the same blessing to such as were yet destitute of it. "We," said a female slave, when bringing her contribution to the Demerara Missionary Society, "ought, of all persons, to help our poor fellow creatures. Once we had not the gospel; but the people of England have sent it to us; and we ought to help in sending it all over the world."

In the early part of 1818 Mr. Watson published a defence of the commonly received opinion of the eternal Sonship of Christ, in answer to the objections of Dr. Adam Clarke. Mr. Watson's pamphlet was entitled, "Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation: suggested by several Passages in Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament." It was considered one of the ablest defences of that doctrine; and the Rev. Robert Hall spoke of it in terms of high commendation. It was read with great avidity; and so rapid was the sale that a second edition was called for in a few weeks.

The most valuable and important part of the work is that in which the author points out the

use of reason in matters of revelation. On this subject he remarks :—"The office of reason is, to judge of the evidence of the record professing to be a revelation from God. When we are satisfied of the divine authority of Scripture, our understanding is to be employed humbly, and with dependance upon God, in ascertaining its sense : and whatever doctrine is there stated, or necessarily implied by the harmony of its different parts, is to be admitted, believed, and held fast, whether it corroborate or contradict the notions which our previous or collateral reasonings have led us to adopt."

"I know," he continues, "that it is more flattering to the human mind to be accounted a judge, than to be reduced to the rank of a scholar ; to be placed in a condition to summon divine wisdom to its bar, and oblige it to give an account of the reasons of its decisions, than to receive them upon authority ; but this is the safe, because the humble, path : and I greatly mistake, if it be not also the true way to high illumination in the things of God. It is to the patient, prayerful study of divine truth, by its own light, that its harmonies, and connections, and beauties most freely reveal themselves ; as the bud discloses to the solar light the graces it refuses to the hand of violence."

According to the direction of the conference, the committee who were intrusted with the management of the missions prepared the plan of a General Wesleyan Missionary Society. The principal feature of this plan was, that it called into exercise the good sense and practical knowledge of pious laymen in connection with the missionary work, by making them members of the managing committee ; reserving to the preachers only the examination of missionaries, and all cases of discipline, according to the usages of the body. This plan, which was drawn up by Mr. Watson, with the advice of his brethren, received the cordial sanction of the conference of 1818, to whom it was submitted for approval.

At this conference Mr. Watson was appointed to labour in the London west circuit. His colleagues in the missionary secretaryship were the Rev. Messrs. Jabez Bunting and Joseph Taylor, the latter of whom was directed to reside at the mission-house, and give his whole attention to the concerns of the missions. This arrangement was rendered necessary by the increased extent of the missions ; it being impossible for the secretaries to carry on the necessary correspondence, and pay the requisite attention to the instruction and outfit of the

missionaries, and at the same time to discharge efficiently their pastoral duties.

In October, 1818, Mr. Watson, at the request of the committee of that institution, preached the annual sermon before the Sunday School Union, from Mark ix, 36, 37. The sermon, which was entitled "Religious Instruction an Essential Part of Education," was afterward published at the request of the committee, and quickly passed through two or three editions.

It was in the year 1819 that the Wesleyan Conference commenced the practice of publishing an annual address to the societies. These addresses have been productive of much benefit to the Methodist connection. They have served to strengthen the bond of union between the conference and the societies; and to communicate much important pastoral advice, both in regard to personal religion, and the various branches of Christian duty. The first of these addresses, and also several of the succeeding ones, were drawn up by Mr. Watson, who excelled in this species of composition.

CHAPTER VIII.

Missionary Report for 1819—Mr. Watson visits the counties of Cornwall and Norfolk—Letter to a friend suffering under domestic affliction—Mr. Emory's visit to the British Conference—Mr. Watson's correspondence with the missionaries—Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley—Missionary reports for 1820—Anniversary of the Missionary Society in 1821—Preparatory religious exercises—Conference of 1821—Mr. Watson appointed one of the resident missionary secretaries—Letter to his daughter—Becomes a private member of a class—Letter to a missionary—Letter to Mrs. Watson—Missionary report for 1821—Second visit to Cornwall—Letter to Mr. Walton—Mr. Watson's spirit at missionary anniversaries—Anniversary of the General Society in 1822.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Watson was diligent in attending to his pastoral duties, and was ready for every good work, yet it was in the missionary department that his heart was more especially interested; and its regular advancement was to him a source of solid gratification. The "Report" for 1819 stated that the number of missionaries then actually employed under the direction of the conference was one hundred and twenty, and that the committee were about to send out twenty-four additional ones; while the contributions to the society during the year had amounted to \$108,838, being an increase of more than \$21,000 over that of the preceding year.

In the months of February and April, 1820, Mr. Watson, accompanied by Mr. Bunting,

visited the counties of Cornwall and Norfolk, for the purpose of advocating the cause of missions from the pulpit and the platform. The result of their visit to Cornwall is thus stated in a letter written from Truro, in March, by the Rev. Richard Treffry, sen. :—

“In the course of the last month, the Rev. Messrs. Bunting and Watson, two of the general secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, paid a visit to Cornwall; where, besides preaching in the principal places, in the different circuits of that district, they held public meetings in Penzance, Camborne, Helston, Falmouth, and Truro. Never was there a greater interest excited among the religious part of the inhabitants of that county, than on these occasions; and though the meetings were continued from five to six hours, and the chapels uncommonly crowded, yet the people gladly continued to the end. Besides the public collections, which were more liberal than were ever remembered in Cornwall, we confidently expect, from the more regular organization of an auxiliary society for that district, and branch societies for the several circuits, that the missionary fund will receive considerable assistance.”

Messrs. Bunting and Watson expressed them-

selves as highly gratified with their tour in Cornwall. The Cornish Methodists exemplified the motto of their country; and came forward "one and all," to assist in sending the gospel to the heathen.

The following is an extract of a letter addressed by Mr. Watson to an esteemed friend, who was then in deep distress on account of domestic affliction:—

"To Mr. William Walton, of Wakefield.

"London, June 5th, 1820.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I should have written before, but that I had an expectation of being called into Leicestershire on some private business, when I fully intended to visit Wakefield, in order to sympathize with you in the troubles in which you have lately been involved. I now find that I cannot have that opportunity; for though I am going to Nottingham next week, to the missionary meeting, that meeting is connected with some others on my way back, so that I cannot possibly get further north. If it be possible, I will call upon you in returning from the conference.

"You have had a large share of trouble; but it is your mercy that you know where your help lies; and that you have proved the power

and grace of Jesus, our Saviour, to comfort all who are in affliction. What a lesson is all this on the vanity of earth, and all it contains! How necessary it is to possess more than creature comforts, which perish in the using! Let us thank God that the best blessings are secured to us by a title which can never be shaken; by the faithful word of Him who is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

"I indulged the hope when I last left your peaceful habitation, that you had escaped all the storms of life, and were anchored in a quiet haven, until the signal should be given for your return to your Father's house above; but there is mercy in every appointment, though we cannot always see it; and 'all things work together for good to them that love God;' and 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' On these promises may your faith steadily repose! There is a harbour, into which no wave of trouble shall roll after us; and for that may we all stand prepared, that so an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly into its everlasting quietness and rest."

The conference of 1820, which was held in Liverpool, was favoured with the presence of the Rev. John Emory, who attended as the

representative of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and was received in the most cordial and friendly manner. His preaching, conversation, and Christian spirit excited a lively interest; and the details which he gave of the work of God in America were of the most cheering kind. Mr. Watson, at the request of the conference, drew up the answer to the address of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had been brought by Mr. Emory. In this document, speaking of Mr. Emory, he says,—

“In him we have recognised the purity of your doctrine, and the fervour and simplicity of your piety. We have received him ‘not as a stranger,’ but ‘as a brother beloved.’ Our hearts are as his heart; and it will be remembered as one of the most pleasing circumstances connected with the conference held in this town, that our personal intercourse with you was here restored, and that this work of love was committed to so able and excellent a brother, whose public ministrations, and addresses in our conference, have been equally gratifying and instructive to us and to our people.”

At this conference Mr. Watson was returned a third year to the London west circuit; and was also continued, with his two associates, in

the office of missionary secretary. Of the duties of the secretaryship, which were onerous, and also involved considerable responsibility, that of corresponding with the missionaries, which now devolved upon Mr. Watson, was not one of the least important. Some of the missionaries were young men, and needed instruction ; others were placed in circumstances of great and pressing difficulty, and applied for advice. Occasionally, a missionary, especially in an unhealthy climate, would endanger his life by excessive labour, and it was needful to exhort him to moderation, that he might not offer to God murder for sacrifice. In some of the stations much preparatory work was necessary, and the missionary, after years of toil, saw but little fruit of his labours ; and he was therefore in danger of growing weary and faint in his mind, and his case called for affectionate sympathy and encouragement. Mr. Watson's resources, however, were equal to every emergency ; and his correspondence with the missionaries was distinguished by great piety, affection, and fidelity ; admirably adapted to " stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance," and excite them to cultivate their talents, and maintain the spirit of Christian godliness.

In addition to the duties connected with his

circuit and the missions, Mr. Watson was now called upon to use his pen in defence of Methodism and its venerable founder. In the early part of 1820, a work entitled "The Life of Wesley, and the Rise and Progress of Methodism, by Robert Southey, Poet-Laureate," was published in two large volumes. This publication did justice to Mr. Wesley's great abilities, to his attainments as a scholar, and his fine temper as a man and a controversialist; it also acknowledged the extensive moral good which had been effected through his instrumentality, and was on the whole much less severe in its censures than, from the well-known principles of its author, had been anticipated. But notwithstanding this, its misrepresentations of the doctrines of Methodism, and the character of Mr. Wesley, arising from the writer's high-church prejudices, and his gross ignorance on the subject of evangelical religion, were such that a defence of both was deemed necessary. The Wesleyan book committee accordingly requested Mr. Watson to prepare a review of Mr. Southey's book; and a resolution, approving of this request, was passed at the conference of 1820, where Dr. A. Clarke declared it as his opinion that Mr. Watson was the fittest man to undertake the responsible task.

Mr. Watson's reply was entitled, "Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley: being a Defence of the Character, Labours, and Opinions of the Founder of Methodism, against the Misrepresentations of that Publication." It was distinguished throughout by eloquence of language and force of reasoning; and was not only a triumphant vindication of Mr. Wesley, but also a masterly defence of some of the most important doctrines of Christianity against the "opposition of science falsely so called."

We give from this work a single extract, in which Mr. Watson notices the allegation, that Mr. Wesley was prompted by "ambition," to his extraordinary course of labour. On this subject he forcibly remarks:—"It is mere trifling to speak of 'ambition,' in the case of Mr. Wesley, in any but the best sense. *Wealth*, it is acknowledged, was not his object; the only *honour* he met with was to be reproached and persecuted; and the *power* of which we have heard so much, was the power to manage the affairs of a despised and a poor people. What was there in this to tempt that low and corrupt ambition which Mr. Southey ascribes to him? I fear that ambitious clergymen may now be found in the Established Church: let then the question of Mr. Wesley's ambition be put to the

proof? Will any of them come among us to seek its gratification? We will give them as many advantages for obtaining the 'notoriety' which Mr. Wesley possessed as possible. They shall have enough of duty, long walks, and longer rides, and fields and streets to preach in, and the darkest parts of the country, and the rudest of the people, and the hardest fare. In proportion, too, as they imitate the zeal of the Wesleys, we will show them all honour and respect on our part; and they will not lack that reproach of which the world is not much more parsimonious in the present day, than when the names of the Wesleys were cast out as evil. It will not fail to calumniate them while living, if they give it too much disturbance; and perhaps some future poet-laureate may lay by his birth-day and coronation odes to asperse them when dead. Will all this tempt their ambition? I suppose not. Neither in their day nor night dreams does Methodism ever occur to them as the road to honour; and yet if it opened to Mr. Wesley so fine a field for the gratification of his ambition, why should not theirs press into the same course, in the hope of seizing the same prize? Have they learning? So had he. Have they prospects in the Church? So had he. Have

they ambition? So, Mr. Southey tells us, had he. How then is it that he alone, of all the ambitious clergymen we ever heard or read of, was impelled by it into the course he adopted; and that none besides himself ever thought that field preaching and itinerancy opened the way to a distinction sufficient to allay the ambitious appetite of any ‘conqueror,’ or any ‘poet?’ I leave the difficulty to be explained by him who created it.”

In the spring of 1821 Mr. Watson visited several large towns in different parts of the country, for the purpose of assisting at the anniversaries of missionary societies. He also prepared the Report of the General Society for 1820, which he read at the annual meeting, and which described the prosperous state of the missions. The number of missionaries was increased to nearly one hundred and fifty; the stations occupied were more than a hundred; and upward of twenty-seven thousand members were united in church fellowship, under the care of the missionaries, and the fruit of their labours.

At this meeting there was an unusual display of Christian liberality; the contributions amounting to upward of \$4,700. A spirit of holy triumph and zeal pervaded the assembly, which was

greatly promoted by the preparatory religious exercises. In reference to this fact, Mr. Watson, in his account of the meeting, in the "Missionary Notices," made the following remarks : — "The three sermons usual on this occasion were preached on Thursday and Friday, April 26 and 27, by the Rev. Messrs. Buckley, Newton, and Lessey. We take this opportunity of remarking, that we are more than ever convinced of the great importance of connecting such services with the public meetings of missionary societies, whether in town or country. They greatly tend, by the divine blessing, to produce a serious and hallowed tone of feeling. For public meetings, as affording the very best facilities for the communication of important intelligence, both as to the incipient success, and as to the still existing necessity of missionary labours, we are sincere and decided advocates. We believe they are greatly blessed by Almighty God, not only in the excitement, but in the proper and efficient direction of benevolent zeal and activity; and that if they were neglected or discouraged, a large portion of our present means of doing good must at once be (in our judgment most foolishly and criminally) abandoned. But if missionary sermons, without meetings, would leave the

work in most cases but half done ; we fear, on the other hand, that missionary meetings, unconnected with sermons, suited to the solemn occasion, and with other special and appropriate exercises of social devotion, would soon lose, by such omission, more than half of their present blessing to ourselves, and of their eventual utility to those for whose illumination and salvation they are principally convened. For the various information on missionary topics, and for the free and spirited displays of Christian eloquence, which characterize a good public meeting, we are best prepared when we take time and pains to ‘sanctify’ the whole system ‘by the word of God and prayer.’ Much of this holy influence, we trust, was felt in our late general meeting, as the result, under God, of the three annual sermons to which we have referred ; and of those which were preached in various chapels on the sabbath.”

Mr. Watson attended the conference of 1821, which was held in Manchester, uncertain as to the place where his future lot would be cast. At that time London was only divided into two circuits ; and as he had been stationed in both of them, he could not, consistently with the rules of the connection, be reappointed to the

metropolis as an itinerant preacher.* The friends in Birmingham were anxious to secure his labours, and urgently solicited his appointment to their circuit. In consequence of the growing extent and importance of the missions, it was necessary that the society should employ a second resident secretary, in order to their efficient and successful management: Mr. Watson's long experience, established character as a public man, distinguished ability, and active habits, all pointed him out as eminently qualified for that very responsible situation; and the committee pressed the conference to fix him in that station. During the sitting of the conference, and while the question of his destination was undecided, he addressed a letter, of which the following is an extract,

“ To Mr. William Walton, Wakefield.

“ Manchester, July, 1821.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—Thinking that it might interest you to know how we are going on at conference, I send you a slight sketch. Mr. G. Marsden has been elected president, and Mr. Newton is the secretary. We are going on

* Among the Wesleyan Methodists a preacher cannot be reappointed to a circuit until after an interval of seven years.

well, and harmoniously. The increase in the societies has been upward of nine thousand at home, and about one thousand three hundred in our foreign missions. Blessed be God!

“Our finances are also very rapidly improving. More than sixty persons have offered themselves as travelling preachers, and most of them for the missions; so that we shall have no lack of men, if we can but get the money to send and support them.

“Where I shall be placed, I do not yet know; whether London or Birmingham. However, I can say that I only wish to be where I may best serve the great cause of Jesus Christ.

“While I am writing, the preachers are speaking of good Mr. Benson;* and many interesting anecdotes have been mentioned respecting his great character and extensive usefulness. ‘Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?’ May we also be ready!”

After the comparative claims of the missions and the Birmingham circuit had been fully heard and balanced in the conference, it was determined that Mr. Watson should remain in London, as one of the resident missionary se-

* Mr. Benson died in the early part of 1821.

cretaries; an office which he sustained with the highest credit to himself, and advantage to the cause, for six successive years. This appointment was suited to his declining health; and it secured to him greater leisure than he had enjoyed for several years. His duties were, indeed, numerous and urgent; but he was freed from the cares and engagements of the itinerant ministry, and generally spent his evenings in his study. The time which he could thus command he devoted to the composition of valuable theological works, by which he rendered essential service to the cause of religion.

During the sittings of this conference Mr. Watson addressed the following letter to his daughter. It shows the tenderness of his affection as a father, and his earnest desire for her mental improvement and spiritual interests

“Manchester, July 31st, 1821.

“MY DEAR MARY,—From one of your uncle’s letters I learn that you are still at Portsmouth; and as we are not to remove from London this year, I am not anxious about your stay being a little prolonged, as I hope it may be favourable to your health, and fit you for closer application on your return. I hope, however, to see

you on my return, which I expect will be in about a week or ten days.

“The kindness of friends to you I feel as an obligation to myself. Thank them for yourself and me.

“I trust, my dear girl, that you have not neglected to meet in class; nor to remember that the good desires which by the mercy of God you have received must be carefully cultivated. In order to this, spend some part of your time every day in private, in reading God’s holy word, and in praying to your Father who seeth in secret. Choose the good part, which shall not be taken from you: and live every day as a person who has chosen it. Let your intercourse with others be cheerful, but serious; and let the fear of an all-seeing God never depart from you.

“We are getting on pretty well and expeditiously with business, and hope soon to come to a conclusion. I write this in conference, and have no time for a long epistle.

“God bless you, my dearest child!”

Mr. Watson, being now released from the cares and responsibilities of the pastoral office, was enabled to direct his entire attention to the concerns of the missions, and to literary

pursuits. There was, however, one disadvantage connected with his change of situation, as by it he was cut off from the advantage of Christian fellowship which he had enjoyed in the quarterly visitation of the classes, and in other meetings of similar kind ; and his "pure mind" was consequently no longer "stirred up by way of remembrance," as it had formerly been, by regularly listening to recitals of Christian experience. Convinced that "the communion of saints," according to the apostolic admonition, (Heb. x, 25,) was one of the most effectual means of promoting personal piety, he entered his name as a private member of a class, under the care of Mr. Wright Turnell, an aged Methodist, whose religious character had been tried by great vicissitudes of life. He could tell many a tale of early Methodism, and describe the preaching of the Wesleys, and Mr. Fletcher, and Walter Sellon, and their contemporaries ; but that which recommended him to Mr. Watson was his deep and simple piety. The class consisted mostly of poor people, accustomed to daily labour ; but they were spiritual worshippers of God ; their hearts and treasure were in heaven ; and they used to meet together weekly, to declare the goodness of the Lord, and to be helpers of each

other's joy. With these simple-hearted people Mr. Watson was wont to associate once a week, in the evening, when his health would permit; and their meetings, unobserved by the world, were often seasons of great spiritual refreshment and edification. On his appearance in the room, among his humble friends, he was generally requested to act the part of the class leader; and it was observed that the advice which he gave to each person, after inquiring into his state, was almost always expressed in the language of Scripture, in the application of which he possessed a remarkable facility. Mr. Turnell has long since been gathered to his fathers; but some members of the class survive; and they often refer, with considerable emotion, to the time when Mr. Watson belonged to their fraternity, took his seat among them as "a brother," and appeared

"An easy, free, and but more knowing-friend."

Mr. Watson's piety was observable in the whole of his conduct; and it gave a richness and force to his correspondence with the missionaries. The following letter was addressed to the Rev. Robert Young, an excellent young missionary, who had just entered upon his work at Kingston, Jamaica:—

“London, Oct. 30th, 1821.

“DEAR BROTHER,—Your safe arrival, and promising entrance upon your work, give us pleasure. You have entered upon a very important field of labour; and you will find the following things necessary to keep before you.

“1. To speak, preach, and labour, every day, as though it were your last on earth; as though, at the close of it, you were to give up your account to your Saviour.

“2. To give part of every day to secret reading of the Scriptures, and earnest closet prayer. We must draw from the fountain, before we can fill the vessels of others.

“3. To read something useful in practical and doctrinal divinity, &c., every day. Let not your books remain unused. By a right application of your time you may accomplish this.

“4. To take care of your pulpit preparations. It is no reason for carelessness, that you preach to negroes. It requires more care and labour to prepare a plain sermon, clearly explaining important doctrine, and so illustrating it as to be beneficial to the ignorant, than to make a flashy, rhetorical, empty harangue. Let these preparations be fervently prayed over.

“5. To converse much in private with your

class leaders, and other persons of some standing in the society, in order to promote their Christian knowledge and piety ; that they may be props and stays to the society. You must, however, do this with dignity, and without foolish familiarity.

“ 6. To visit the sick as much as possible, and catechize children and adults. These are blessed exercises, and will not fail to be profitable to your own soul, and fruitful to others.

“ 7. To be always *at* your work, and *in* your work, public or private, leaving all common and worldly concerns and conversation to others, who have not your work to do.

“ 8. To act in the full spirit of your instructions, whatever others may do, and endeavour in all your intercourse with your brethren to promote their spirituality and your own by holy converse. Remember to keep and send your journal.

“ With love to Mrs. Young and the brethren, I am yours truly.”

During the autumn of this year Mr. Watson attended missionary meetings at Leeds, Doncaster, and some other places, where he pleaded the cause with his usual eloquence and

effect; and while he gladdened the hearts of the people with statements of the past success of the missions, his own spirit was cheered by the exhibitions of Christian zeal and liberality which everywhere met his view. These labours were, however, performed under much feebleness of health, as will appear from the following letter, written to Mrs. Watson, in the course of his journey:—

“Wainfleet, Thursday evening.

“MY DEAREST MARY,—Through divine mercy I have been brought on my journey to this place, and have got through my work, though with difficulty. My lungs have been very tender, and sometimes I have been very feeble; but, upon the whole, I am not worse, and, I think, a little better; and begin to hope that I shall get through all my appointments. At Raithby Hall I have been treated with great tenderness by Mrs. Brackenbury, who has been with me in her carriage to all the missionary meetings in the neighbourhood; and taken me back, nursing me with great care. Thank God for these comforts, when they are so welcome. I have been a little low sometimes; but upon the whole, I have rested on God, and felt that he was with me.

“I shall write again, God willing, from Leeds ; and, with care, I trust I shall get comfortably through. To-morrow I join the steam packet to Lincoln, and on Saturday go to Retford.

“The weather has been mild and beautiful, which has been much in my favour.

“My love to the dear children, who, I hope, are diligent in their studies. If you write on Monday, I shall get your letter on Wednesday. Do not fail.

“May you be kept in health and peace under the protection of our blessed Saviour. Remember me in your prayers. I am yours very truly and ever affectionately.”

From the annual report of the missions for 1821 it appeared that eleven missionaries, several of whom were married, had been sent out in the course of the year ; and that from many quarters of the work there were numerous and urgent calls for additional missionaries. The income of the society for the past year had amounted to \$126,558, being much greater than that of any former year ; the expenditure, however, during the same period had been so great as to leave a balance against the society of \$35,950 ; a sum, which might have created

some uneasiness had not the committee the utmost confidence that the work would not be suffered to want that aid which should support it, not only on its present, but even on a much more extended scale.

In the early part of 1822 Mr. Watson, in conjunction with the Rev. Messrs. Reece and Taylor, visited Cornwall, where they spent about a month in preaching and attending missionary meetings at some of the principal towns. They found the Cornish preachers and people of one heart in the blessed work. At all the meetings the attendance was exceedingly large; the contributions were liberal beyond all former precedent, and the concern manifested in behalf of the spiritual interests of the heathen world was evidently deep and ardent.

On his return from Cornwall he began to prepare for a journey into the north, for the purpose of attending missionary anniversaries at some of the principal towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire; but he was again assailed by disease and in a somewhat new form. The following letter describes his situation with a degree of playfulness, which those persons will well understand who are just recovering from the complaint in question:—

“ To Mr. William Walton, Wakefield.

“ London, April 1st, 1822.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—Two reasons have delayed an answer to your kind letter : first, it arrived when I was in Cornwall ; second, that since the day after my return, I have been laid up with the gout ; and the attack has been so sharp, that for near three weeks I have been confined to the sofa, not being able to take a step. I am now, however, so rapidly improving, that I begin to feel it a matter of tolerable certainty, that I shall be able to set off on my journey to Manchester at the latter end of the week ; or that, at all events, I shall reach Wakefield on the Wednesday before the meeting.

“ You will probably smile at my having the gout ; but so it is ; and no pleasant companion, I assure you, though kings and nobles so often make acquaintance with it. My general health, I thank God, is much better.

“ I shall again be most happy to see my old and beloved friends ; and trust that we shall not meet together at the anniversary of your society in vain.

“ Our accounts from abroad are generally favourable. The work of God appears to his servants in many parts of the heathen world ;

and his glory will, we trust, descend upon their children. Sickness and death have, however, made great inroads in many of our stations. We have lost seven missionaries in the West Indies during the year; and four are disabled in India."

The anniversaries of missionary societies were with Mr. Watson seasons of deep and hallowed feeling. The cheerfulness which he felt on these occasions at the sight of old friends, still engaged in the service of God; and the grateful joy which he cherished because of past success, and the displays of Christian liberality which he was often privileged to witness, were chastened and tempered by the recollection that the far greater part of the population of our globe were still "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." This state of things, he thought, called for solemn, earnest, and prevailing prayer, on the part of the church, for larger effusions of that divine influence which alone can render successful human efforts for the salvation of the souls of men.

In the account which he gave in the Missionary Notices of the services connected with the annual meeting of the general society for

1822, he particularly specifies a public prayer meeting held in the City-Road chapel, at six o'clock in the morning, for the purpose of specially imploring the divine blessing on the anniversary, and on Christian Missions throughout the world.

"This," he remarks, "was found by the ministers and people who attended it to be a most edifying and delightful addition to the usual services of the occasion; and we strongly recommend that, wherever it is practicable, a similar meeting should always be included in the arrangements made for the anniversaries of auxiliary societies. We are persuaded that prayer—solemn, fervent, united prayer—is among the most necessary and most powerful of those means by which Christians are now peculiarly called to promote the work and cause of God; and that, in fact, without an increase in their prayers, in connection with the continuance and augmentation of their pecuniary contributions, the grand object of our common hope and effort, the conversion of THE WORLD, will never be accomplished. We rejoice, therefore, in every indication of a growing spirit of supplication among those who take an active part in missionary institutions."

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Watson's attention to the instruction of missionaries—Letters to Dr. Ellis—Visits Brighton for the benefit of his health—Letter to his son—Publishes the first part of his Theological Institutes—Letter to Dr. M'Allum concerning a mission to the Holy Land—Letter to a friend on the use of organs in Methodist chapels—Observations on congregational singing—Publishes the second part of the Institutes—Compiles the Wesleyan Catechism—Publishes his sermon in defence of the religious instruction of the slaves in the West Indies—Visit to Oxford.

ONE of the important objects to which Mr. Watson directed his attention after he became one of the resident missionary secretaries, was the theological training of the young men who were so happy as to be placed under his care previously to their entering upon the missionary work. "He took great pleasure," says Mr. Newstead, "in directing their minds, and assisting them in their studies. Several have acquired the classical, and some the oriental languages under his roof. And, indeed, whether from his conversations or advices, his prayers or directions, if any went from his house unimproved, it must have been from their own inattention, or want of application. Under his roof, I had myself the happiness of bringing through the press the New Testament and Book of Common Prayer in the Indo-Portuguese; and when I fully calculated on again returning to

India, and was furnishing myself with additions to my library, I remember with what kind assiduity he would walk out with me expressly to aid with his judgment my various purchases, and to point out the best editions of classical and other authors, with which his extensive reading had made him acquainted. I should indeed be ungrateful, if I did not acknowledge the great obligations under which I was laid by his kindness and by his wisdom, during the whole of my intercourse with him. I am among the many who have to be endlessly thankful that he ever existed."

Notwithstanding Mr. Watson's general debility at this time, [1822,] and his frequent attacks of illness, he continued to discharge the various duties of his office in a manner which was equally honourable to himself, and satisfactory to those with whom he was connected. Under what circumstances he entered upon the year 1823 will appear from the following extracts of letters, addressed to his kind friends Doctor and Mrs. Ellis, of Wakefield, who had pressed him to pay them a visit, and take up a temporary residence with them:—

"London, January 4th, 1823.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your very kind and obliging invitation of a poor invalid has greatly

affected me ; and I would sooner have said how much I am sensible of your and Mrs. Ellis's friendship, but that my state has been so precarious. I most sincerely thank you.

“ The complaint itself appears to have been subdued ; but the debility which has ensued has been very great ; yet I trust that I am in the course of improvement. I am too green to venture on a journey yet, had I not had also another, but slight, attack of the gout in the foot. This will, I think, be very temporary ; and should it please God to raise me to a strength sufficient to travel, in a few weeks, I will accept your kindness, and give myself, by full relaxation, and your advice, and the blessing of God upon both, a chance of full restoration.

“ Our family afflictions have been increased by a visitation of the scarlet fever. Mary has had a very severe attack, and a little nephew. Whether Tom will escape is doubtful. Mrs. Watson is quite worn down.

“ In the midst of all we know that all is *right*, and that all is good. Thank God for the consolation !”

“ *London, Jan. 27th, 1823.*

“ MY DEAR FRIENDS,—The severity of the weather would alone prevent you from expecting me to fulfil my own purpose, and to meet

your friendly invitation, in visiting Wakefield. Had it been otherwise, I have not, however, been moveable to so great a distance. Till the last fortnight my debility increased; and I certainly was never brought so low in my life. Since then I have been under the tonic and restorative process; and, with now and then a slip back, have been improving.

“I trust that in this affliction I have learned something, though slow of heart to understand and to believe. The complaint, as you know, is accompanied with no small degree of pressure on the spirits. I, at least, have found it so. I have thought of dying, and leaving my family at a crisis when they seemed most to need me; or of living a poor, helpless invalid, in the poverty and neglect of a supernumerary preacher; and many more of these saddening reflections have crowded in at different times. But to feel in the midst of every *sinking*, that you could set your foot upon a *rock*, and stand secure, this is the privilege of *faith*; and I thank God, I have it. However, I trust that something brighter is opening; and that, with great care, I shall be efficient, in a tolerable degree, a few years longer; and live only for what life is worth,—to acquire a deeper acquaintance with God, and to be useful to men.

“I thought I ought to inform you how I was going on, lest you should think I neglected your kind invitation; and this must be my apology for a letter on that very poor subject—*self*. I hope to be able to accomplish the journey to Wakefield when the weather becomes more mild and settled, and when I have got up the hill a little further. At present I do not go out; nor have I left the house for the last six weeks.”

“*London, February 11th, 1823.*”

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—I write in a state of mortification, at a disappointment. My medical attendants have declared against my going northward in my present state of debility, and have ordered me to Brighton, to perfect what, I thank God, is a state of *slowly* returning strength. The missionary committee took up the subject, and backed them; and in vain I urged, that, though the air might be cooler, yet the friends I should visit were warmer, and that the inward enjoyment would make up all. To Brighton, therefore, I am driven; and my place is taken for to-morrow.”

From Brighton, to which place he was accompanied by Mrs. Watson, he addressed the following letter to his son:—

“Brighton, Feb. 18th, 1823.

“DEAR TOM,—After having been cheated by the Angel coach in the fare, and squeezed up in a six-inside old Islington stage, we arrived safely here. Through the mercy of God I feel my health improve, though the weather is cold. I got out to chapel twice yesterday; and was thankful that again I was brought by Providence into the house of God, to worship at his footstool.

“Thursday was a calm day; but Friday and Saturday brought us gales and wind, and your mother was all wonder at the waves. The roar of the sea was in our ears night and day, and filled the mind with sublime thoughts of the power of the elements, and the might of their great Ruler.

“We live in a curious sort of style, having every little thing to provide. Sometimes we are without butter when the meal comes, and we have to send out; and then we wonder whether our remaining piece of bread will serve us for breakfast or tea; so that we need a good deal of contrivance, and our forgetfulness is often amusing.

“Save an occasional visit from the preachers, we are not likely to be called upon by any person of intelligence or interest.

“I hope you are diligent while at study; and that you will leave yourself, by application, the leisure for exercise. You are now approaching man’s estate, and must “put away childish things.” Be thoughtful for your future prospects in life; and, above all, give your heart to God. Seek him *first*; and you will not be without his providence to direct you in life; and without that you will be wretched. Make a point of reading a portion of Scripture every day, with prayer that you may obtain pardon, and experience that *conversion* without which you can never enter the kingdom of God. Write this upon your heart.”

Mr. Watson’s visit to Brighton appears to have been attended with benefit to his health; in a letter written after his return to London, and dated April 1st, he speaks of himself as being, by divine mercy, so far restored as to be able to do a little work, and with a prospect of increasing strength. He did not, however, sufficiently recover to enable him this spring to afford his usual assistance at anniversaries of missionary societies in the country. But if he was cut off by indisposition from the active service to which he had been accustomed, he did not therefore allow his moments to “linger unemployed;”

but devoted them to the advancement of an important theological work upon which he had been for some time engaged.

Although Mr. Watson's pen was seldom idle, yet, up to this time, his publications had consisted mostly of single sermons, controversial pamphlets, missionary reports, communications to periodical works, and other productions of a similar kind. He had, however, long cherished the design of producing something of a more permanent character. Recollecting the disadvantages under which he had laboured when he first went into a Methodist circuit, and entered upon the study of divinity; and being aware that many of his junior brethren were still in the same circumstances, he was desirous of preparing some work that should assist them in their theological studies. After some deliberation he determined to write a body of Christian theology. Upon this undertaking he entered in the fall of 1821, soon after his appointment as one of the resident missionary secretaries, and to it he gave all the leisure which he could command. The work was entitled, "Theological Institutes; or a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, and Morals of Christianity," and was published at intervals in six parts. The first part appeared in the spring

of 1823, and was remarkably well received, a second edition being soon called for. This work served to establish the reputation which the writer had previously acquired as an able divine and a profound reasoner.

In the autumn of this year Mr. Watson addressed the following letter to the Rev. Dr. M'Allum, on the interesting subject of a Wesleyan mission to the Holy Land; a measure which had been long contemplated, and in favour of which several subscriptions had been presented:—

“ London, Sept. 19th, 1823.

“ DEAR SIR,—I write to you on a subject of great importance; and one on which I trust you will make no attempt to say *No*, until you have asked counsel of God, and your best feelings.

“ You know that a mission to Jerusalem is before the committee, and something must be done with reference to that object. It is forced upon us by the prayers of the pious, and the contributions of the generous. We have never put it forward to excite interest; and yet we are constantly getting money with this designation.

“ Our view is, that a mission house should be taken, and a family settled there; and that two missionaries be appointed, one married and

the other single. Much might be done by conversation, and circulating the Scriptures, &c., in the first place, and by *public* family worship. The rest must follow as the Lord may open the door. We think it likely, too, that the countries beyond may open; in which case the house at Jerusalem might become the centre of a distinct class of missions, and the school in which the labourers might be trained for service, or sent out from England.

“ But who will go, and head this great work, looking forward to Syria and Lesser Asia, and backward upon the Euphrates and Armenia, as scenes to which his labours may extend, though not personally, yet by commencing the work in Palestine, the very centre of intelligence, and by training up the agents there? How noble a scene of useful labour! And the sacrifices are not great. Jerusalem is healthy; protection can be obtained; the journey from England is short; intercourse with friends regular; and a trip to England every few years quite practicable.

“ But for such a mission we, as a body, have a very limited choice of men, who ought to be literary, and, in addition, ought, in order to have the best chance of favour, &c., among the principal men, to know medicine and surgery.

“ We lay this matter before you, in the name of the Lord, at least to go on an exploring excursion, before you make up your mind fully to give yourself to the work. You might go, with Mr. Cook, (from France,) or some other suitable person, to Jerusalem, and report ; or if you will at once, in the name of Him whose blessed footsteps trod that soil, offer yourself to make the attempt to settle at once in Jerusalem, and put the practicability of a mission there to the test, take your excellent wife, and we will give you the best brother we can find to help you. The time of your stay may be left with yourself. The Italian language might help you sufficiently at the first ; and modern Greek and Arabic may be acquired there. We have no other person to head such a mission, to whom we can look. Think, pray, and write, as soon as you have determined at least to make further inquiries.

“ The God who has never forgotten Jerusalem direct you ! There are ten thousand Jews resident there, and not highly prejudiced ; many are respectable ; there are many amiable daughters of Zion, with whom your wife can form a pleasant society ; and several Christian missionaries of the first order, &c., &c. I speak the words of truth and soberness.

“ Give my love to Mrs. M’Allum. Let her remember Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, the family whom Jesus loved ; and put no difficulty in the way of another family residing there in the same place, whom Jesus may also love and to whom he will pay many special visits of mercy.”

The application appears to have been without effect ; Dr. M’Allum, for some reasons with which we are unacquainted, declining the service here proposed to him.

During the greater part of the year 1823, Mr. Watson was either severely afflicted, or in such a state of debility as to be scarcely able to travel ; and his time was therefore mostly spent in the mission house and in his own room. His powerful and active mind, however, rose above every infirmity, and was constantly employed in useful study. The approbation with which the first part of his “ Theological Institutes” had been received urged him to the completion of that work. He also wrote several valuable communications for the Wesleyan Magazine, among which was an admirable discourse, entitled, “ Man magnified by the Divine Regard.” It was founded on Job vii, 17, and is one of the most eloquent and impressive of Mr. Watson’s published sermons.

Mr. Watson possessed a fine taste in sacred music. Of his judgment in this science, and especially in reference to congregational singing, his friends were fully aware. In the latter part of 1823 the Methodists in Wakefield, having been for some time dissatisfied with the manner in which this part of divine worship was performed among them, meditated the erection of an organ in their chapel, and solicited his opinion and counsel on this measure. In answer to their inquiries, he addressed to one of them the following letter, from which it will be seen that his views respecting the use of instrumental music in divine worship had been greatly modified since the publication of "The Book of Kane," twenty years before :—

"London, Monday.

"DEAR SIR,—I am unable to say any thing but what is exceedingly obvious, in the case of the introduction of organs into our chapels ; and I think the only question to be considered is, whether they serve or obstruct congregational singing. On this, opinions differ ; some affirming, and others denying as positively, that the congregation trusts to the organ, and listens, rather than joins in the service. As far as my observation goes, this does not necessarily follow. In churches where the congrega-

tions are irreligious, it is so ; but it would be the same if there were only a clerk, or an orchestra of singers and fiddlers. In many churches I know, where the minister is evangelical, and the congregation devotional, the organ is scarcely heard but at the commencement of the tune, its sounds being mingled with the full swell of the voices of the worshippers.

“ Among ourselves, at Brunswick chapel, Liverpool, the congregation joins with as much ardour as if there were no organ, and I think more. This is also the case at Bath, (in both the chapels,) at Margate, and at Newark. These facts have fixed my opinion in favour of organs in large chapels, and where they are prudently and constitutionally introduced. The only exception I know is one in which the tone of the organ is so intolerably harsh, that no sound in heaven or in earth can commingle with it. I believe, however, that even there the people sing ; but after all, the tones of the organ, like the voice of a fishwoman in a market, keep a lofty distinction above all others. This exception only proves that it is of importance to have an instrument of full and mellifluous tone.

“ On the other hand, we shall regret the day when the liberty to introduce organs into our

chapels, under certain circumstances, was granted, if we are to have organists also who seek to display their talents, and to tell a gaping crowd below with what elasticity their fingers can vibrate, and how many graces and trills they can add to the composition before them ;—men who could not think the sun shone bright, unless they looked at his beams through a painted transparency of their own ; and who would fancy they heightened the sublimity of a peal of thunder by ringing handbells during the storm. The attempt of some organists to embellish and garnish the noble compositions of our great masters in psalmody is disgusting beyond endurance. Voluntaries are equally objectionable for a different reason. If good, they are out of place ; if bad, they do not deserve a place anywhere.

“ As you are good enough to attach the least importance to an opinion of mine, I may give you in few words my deliberate judgment, formed now for several years, and after some observations of the practical effect. It is, that organs in our large chapels are desirable.

“ 1. When they abolish formal choirs of singers.

“ 2. When they are played by persons of judgment and sobriety.

“ 3. When the end for which they are introduced, to assist congregational singing, is steadily maintained.

“ 4. When no voluntaries, interludes, &c., are, on any account, or at any time, permitted.

“ 5. When the tune is not first played over by the organ alone ; a common but very silly practice.

“ 6. When nothing is done rashly, or in the spirit of party ; for many of the best men have the strongest prejudices against the instrument.”

Mr. Watson had a high sense of the solemnity and decorum with which the public worship of God ought always to be conducted. *Of choirs of singers he deliberately, and on principle, disapproved* ; and he was of opinion that they had greatly injured the psalmody and devotion of the Methodist congregations. In large chapels he had no objection to an organ, if properly managed ; but as a general thing he preferred that musical instruments should be dispensed with, and the congregations left to the guidance of a pious and judicious leading singer. “ Our people,” he would sometimes say, “ are a devotional people : they love psalmody ; and were they not hindered by the trifling of the choir, they would produce the finest congregational singing in the world.”

The following observations on the subject of congregational singing, which are extracted from a preface written by Mr. Watson for a revised edition of Mr. Wesley's "Sacred Harmony," may be appropriately introduced in this place :—

“ In the best ages of the church, and by the judgment of the most eminent and pious of its ministers, *simplicity* has been thought the most appropriate character of sacred music ; and every thing intricate and light, injurious to the genuine spirit of devotion. In this opinion Mr. Wesley cordially concurred, and strenuously opposed light and intricate performances. In his Journal he remarks, ‘ April 8, 1781, I came just in time to Warrington to put a stop to a bad custom which was creeping in here. A few men, who had fine voices, sang a psalm which no one knew, in a tune fit for an opera, wherein three, four, or five persons sung different words at the same time ! What an insult upon common sense ! What a burlesque upon public worship ! No custom can excuse such a mixture of profaneness and absurdity.’ Many similar observations on abuses in singing may be found in his works : and it is a circumstance of greater importance than will appear to superficial minds, that as we have, through the special goodness of God to us, a collection of the

best hymns, we have also been frequently and seriously admonished to sing them so as to render them helpful to our piety, by ‘making melody in our hearts to the Lord.’

“By the rules which are supplied by the practice of the church of Christ when most influenced by the life and power of religion, and the opinions of her most eminent ministers, on the right performance of this sacred service, all new tunes ought to be tried, and admitted or rejected by those to whom God has given the *charge of his courts*; and who are responsible both to him and the public for the *manner* in which public psalmody is conducted. ‘Psalm-tunes,’ says an eminent divine, ‘ought to be solemn and grave; not vain, light, and airy, as if they were only designed to please and gratify a wanton and sensual mind. This would be to turn one of the most noble and spiritual duties of religion into a mere entertainment for the senses and fancies of carnal men,—to turn God’s house into a theatre; and would desecrate his sacred worship, and make it distasteful to pious minds. The power of music is very great, and may be abused to bad purposes, as well as improved to holy ones; and therefore only such tunes must be used in God’s house as become his majesty and holiness, and

the gravity and spirituality of the worship in which we are engaged.'

"Let nothing, however, which has been said be construed into an intention to discourage the cultivation and improvement of this part of divine worship, both in families and in congregations. On the contrary, it is a religious ordinance of so high an antiquity, one which has been so signally owned of God for comforting and edifying his church, and for alluring even those 'who are without' to her services, that too great care cannot be taken to render it attractive, so that our 'praise be *comely*' and devotional. As a holy means to great and noble ends, science is sacredly employed in giving it as much perfection as possible; for unless singing be so ordered as, in some measure, to be grateful to the ear, the ordinance will be exposed to contempt. 'God is the God of order, and not of confusion.' Simplicity excludes not genius, but is the effect of it; and those modulations which form the best examples of psalmody are all the productions of eminent genius, under the guidance of a proper sense of what is fit and becoming in the worship of God. Such must have been the airs in which the primitive Christians celebrated the praises of Christ; for pagans were attracted by their singing to their

churches, and were often deeply and effectually wrought upon by the service. Nothing but the productions of real genius could have called forth those emotions which rendered psalmody so popular a service among the adherents of the Reformation, and so attractive to papists themselves, that the singing of psalms was prohibited throughout France by a royal declaration. And we have all witnessed the effects produced on whole congregations, when all have joined in a well-adapted tune, and especially Luther's Old Hundredth Psalm Tune, to sing the high praises of our God.

“Neither genius in composition, nor skill in execution, are therefore discouraged by the recommendation of simplicity in singing. This is a common mistake. It is in complex airs that genius is usually most absent; and in a rattling and noisy execution, that skill in execution is least employed.

“Delightful as this service is, it has its corresponding dangers. The very means we take to engage our hearts with ardour to ‘give thanks unto God,’ may, by their appeal to our senses, steal away our attention, and leave our worship a ‘sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.’

“On the contrary, we know, that if rightly performed, nothing is more acceptable to God

our Saviour. Wonderful, indeed, is his condescension, that when the ‘sons of the morning’ still sing together, and surround his throne with hallelujahs, he should say to a child of earth, ‘Let me hear thy voice, for it is pleasant!’ ‘Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.’”

In the beginning of 1824 Mr. Watson published the second part of his “Theological Institutes;” and, shortly afterward, “A Catechism of the Evidences of Christianity, and the Truth of the Holy Scriptures.” He had previously compiled two catechisms of Christian doctrine, and Scripture history; one for the use of children of tender years, and the other for children of seven years of age and upward. These catechisms, which were designed for Sunday schools and private families, were prepared under the direction of the conference, and having been examined and approved by a committee appointed for that purpose, were published as the authorized catechisms of the Wesleyan Methodist body. They have been very extensively used both in England and America; and in the former country have been made use of in some institutions with which the Methodists have no connection.

The question of negro emancipation had now for some time been warmly agitated, in the

House of Commons and throughout the country. This caused a great excitement in the West Indies, and the planters either believing or affecting to believe that the missionaries were the agents of the abolitionists in England, assumed an attitude of determined hostility to them; and in Barbadoes went so far as to raise a mob, who demolished the Wesleyan missionary chapel and dwelling house, and drove the missionary from the island. In this state of affairs, Mr. Watson, who had a thorough knowledge of West India society, and perfectly understood the nature and bearing of the mission to the negro slaves, was requested by the missionary committee to preach one of the annual sermons before the society, at the anniversary for 1824; and to confine his attention to the missions in the West Indies. He accordingly delivered a discourse in the City-Road chapel, from 1 Peter ii, 17,—“*Honour all men;*” enjoining upon Christians the duty of honouring human nature in all its forms. The sermon was delivered with fluency and power; and was heard with the most profound and breathless attention by a large and highly respectable congregation. It occupied nearly two hours in the delivery; and a member of the senate, who was present, said, when returning from the service, “The

sermon was the greatest display of intellectual strength in a public speaker I ever heard. I have perhaps sometimes witnessed an equal degree of power for a short period ; but an extemporary address, of two hours' length, delivered with such unabated energy of thought and feeling, never before came under my observation." The sermon was soon afterward published under the title of, "The Religious Instruction of the Slaves in the West India Colonies advocated and defended." It is the most elaborate of all Mr. Watson's printed discourses, and is, without exception, one of the noblest compositions of the kind in the English language. There are passages in it which, for sublimity of thought, richness of illustration, and strength and beauty of expression, would not suffer from a comparison with the most admired productions of the best prose writers ; but its great excellence consists in the pure and elevated principles which it maintains, and the spirit of Christian benevolence and justice with which it is so thoroughly imbued. It passed through several editions ; and a gentleman, who was unknown to Mr. Watson, offered to print a fine edition at his own expense, to be circulated among the members of parliament.

In the early part of the summer of this year

Mr. Watson visited Oxford, and spent some days in that interesting city and its neighbourhood, where the friends were highly gratified with his spirit and conversation. Before his return to London he went with a party of friends to Nuneham, the seat of Lord Harcourt, to refresh his spirits by a change of air and scenery, and to survey those beauties of art and nature of which, through life, he was a passionate admirer. One of the party was a medical gentleman, of considerable experience and skill. In conversation with this gentleman, Mr. Watson, in a manner perfectly frank and unconstrained, observed, "I know not what change is taking place in my constitution; but I am apprehensive that disease, in a somewhat new form, is beginning to develop itself. I believe that I am not naturally an ill-tempered man; at least my friends have not been in the habit of charging me with ill-nature; but of late I have found myself snappish, without being able to assign any particular reason for it. There is also another symptom which leads me to form this opinion concerning myself. Up to a late period my spirit has been sanguine and cheerful; my horizon has been generally bright and distinct; but latterly I have caught myself gloomy and beclouded, and yet I could not tell

why." The medical gentleman stated his persuasion to be that Mr. Watson's liver was seriously diseased ; but expressed a hope that by prudent management his life might be prolonged, and his services to the church continued for many years ; and he engaged, before Mr. Watson left Oxford, to give him some written directions in regard to diet and medicine.

A more interesting companion than Mr. Watson, especially in a place like Nuneham, it is scarcely possible to conceive. He generally carried with him a small magnifying glass for the examination of minute objects, and particularly of flowers, and a lancet with which he was accustomed to dissect them. Several young persons were of the party on this occasion ; and it appeared to be an object with him to render himself as agreeable and instructive as possible. His spirit was unusually bland and kind ; and he directed their attention to endless scenes of wonder in the creation, accompanied by devout and hallowed references to the great Architect, who had surrounded them with such striking displays of his wisdom, power, and love.

CHAPTER X.

Conference of 1824—Mr. Newstead's notice of the journey to Leeds—Missionary Report for 1824—Rev. W. Dodwell—Conference of 1825—Singular impression—Publication of the third part of the Institutes—Mr. Watson's diligence—Missionary Report for 1825—Loss of missionaries by shipwreck in the West Indies—Death of Mr. Butterworth—Conference of 1826—Mr. Watson elected President—Closing exercises of the Conference—Publication of the fourth part of the Institutes—Missionary Report for 1826—Mr. Watson visits Scotland and Ireland—Conference of 1827—Mr. Watson stationed at Manchester.

THE conference of 1824 was held at Leeds. Mr. Watson was accompanied in his journey thither by the Rev. Robert Newstead, who says, "One of the most delightful journeys I ever took was in company with Mr. Watson to Leeds, in 1824. We were to take the Northampton and Nottingham missionary meetings in our way. The weather was charming and gave a fine elevation to the spirits. Our conversation turned principally on the work of missions, and the subject of preaching; and during a considerable part of one stage, over a lovely country, he was engaged in giving me a beautiful outline of a discourse on 1 John iii, 1, 3. It appeared to be quite new to his contemplation; for he introduced it by saying, 'What should we say in illustration of a passage like

this?' or words to that effect; and beautifully indeed did it illustrate the power of his creative imagination. I remember that among other fine thoughts suggested to him on that portion of the passage, '*It doth not yet appear what we shall be,*' he said, 'You do not, for instance, see what shall be in the yet undeveloped powers of an intellectual human being, from some sparks of intellect which might appear in early life. It did not appear what Milton, or Newton, or Locke would be while yet they were in infancy. We,' he added, 'can see all this beautiful landscape which is around us, more immediately; but it doth not yet appear what is beyond us in the distance. We may infer that it is a continuation of the same beautiful scenery; but it is as yet hidden in the haze of the distant obscurity: *it doth not yet appear.* So when the sun,' he continued, 'arises in the morning, but a faint conception could be formed from the first streaks upon the clouds, what should be the flood of glory which he would pour upon the world by his full meridian beams.' And thus delightfully would he pour forth instruction to those with whom he conversed. It was impossible to be in his company long and not be instructed as well as delighted."

Mr. Watson's health during the session of the conference was tolerably good, and he ventured one Sunday evening to preach to a large congregation in the open air; but soon after his return to London he was laid aside for two weeks by a severe bilious attack.

The state of the Wesleyan missions, as detailed by Mr. Watson in the report of 1824, was highly encouraging. "During the past year," he observes, "God has continued to crown the labours of the brethren abroad, and by their instrumentality has extended the kingdom of his Son into regions, and among tribes, where Christ was never named." In the course of the year twenty-one missionaries had been sent out; and the contributions to the society had amounted to \$180,720. In addition to this handsome sum the society had received a munificent benefaction of \$47,500 from the Rev. W. Dodwell, vicar of Welby, an excellent clergyman of the Established Church, under whose faithful ministry Mr. Watson had received great benefit in early life. (See page 20.) He was a personal friend of Mr. Wesley and of Dr. Coke, and had long been a liberal supporter of the Wesleyan missions. Whenever the anniversaries of missionary societies were held in the neighbourhood of Wel-

by, the free-will offerings of this devout man were generally presented, and gratefully received.

In the spring of 1825 Mr. Watson made a tour in the north, and attended the missionary meetings at Liverpool, Manchester, and some other places; and wherever he went, though his emaciated appearance excited sympathy and concern, his sermons and speeches were heard with unabated delight and profit. The "outward man" appeared to be sinking into decay, but the strength of "the inner man" was undiminished, and his imagination still retained all its freshness and vigour. If there were any alteration in his public ministrations, it was that they were more spiritual; and his whole manner was increasingly devout. The long and severe affliction to which he had been subject had somewhat chastened his natural flow of spirits, and rendered him more grave and sober; but his mental powers were, if possible, invigorated; and his prayerful habits had secured to him, by God's blessing, a sanctified use of his protracted sufferings.

The conference of this year was held at Bristol, and as Mr. Watson's health was too feeble to allow him to travel from London to Bristol in one journey, he requested Mr. Jack-

son to accompany him, and spend a night at Marlborough on the way. The subject is here mentioned because of a curious incident which Mr. Watson related on the occasion. "We arrived," says Mr. Jackson, "at Marlborough in the afternoon, and after dining at the inn, walked out to see that ancient town, and very interesting neighbourhood. In passing by the church-yard Mr. Watson pointed to a grave-stone, in a conspicuous situation, and said, 'The first time I travelled this way, that grave-stone caught my eye; and especially the words, *Who died aged forty-two*. A very deep impression, for which I could not account, was immediately made on my mind, that I should die precisely at the same age. The impression was both strong and sudden. I have already passed beyond that period; and this shows how little stress can be justly laid upon those sudden impulses and impressions of which some people make so much account.' This impression, it appears, had created considerable uneasiness in the family of Mr. Watson; but its precise effect upon his own mind it is not easy to determine."

After the close of the conference, Mr. Watson, before his return to London, spent a few weeks at Cheltenham, in the hope of receiving

some improvement in his health ; but in this, as well as in every similar case, the relief which he obtained was only temporary. The disease under which he laboured was unsubdued. A medical gentleman, whom he consulted there, promised to complete a cure ; but Mr. Watson's hopes were not sanguine.

During the fall of this year he published the third part of his "Theological Institutes." The former parts had met with a rapid sale ; and as the work proceeded the subscribers became increasingly sensible of its value and importance. He did not, however, devote his exclusive attention to this work, but continued, notwithstanding his physical debility, to attend to the duties of his office as missionary secretary. He carefully redeemed the time, as though conscious of the brief space allotted to him. "When at home," says Mr. Newstead, "I have known him often, after returning from the sometimes very laborious occupations of the mission house, immediately after dinner go up into his study, and at the next meal bring down several sheets of his 'Institutes,' or of some other work he had in hand, composed and written in the interval, correcting and amending them as he sat at meat. His great powers of abstraction enabled him to go undis-

turbedly on with the most important work, while others were conversing around him on ordinary topics; yet, if at any time a theme was touched which interested him, he would immediately observe upon it, and then resume his work. He generally read at meals, as if parsimonious of every hour and moment, and would be gathering in various information, or reviewing a book, or drinking deeper into sound theological knowledge, while others were only doing the every-day work of life. He was, indeed, a fine example of the most indefatigable industry, in redeeming time to the most useful purposes."

In the early part of 1826 Mr. Watson published the "Annual Report of the Methodist Missionary Society" for the year 1825, which presented a most gratifying view of the spirit of holy zeal at home, and of the progress of the work of God abroad. We give the concluding passage of this interesting document: "Dark and wretched as the world still is, the kingdom of Christ is visibly enlarging, by his blessings upon human exertions. The seed, in every place, yields its produce to the hands of the reapers, and provides, by its increase, for a sowing more copious, and a harvest more abundant. Wherever we turn, our work en-

larges before us,—the blessed work of declaring the glory and salvation of our Redeemer. Success calls for renewed exertion ; and every labourer sent forth, pressed by the very ripeness and richness of the field, beckons others to follow him. A state of things exists, which a very few years ago no one could have anticipated ; so that, far from finding it difficult to bestow useful exertion, we are not able, in fact, to overtake the work to which we are invited. In our own missions alone, ‘Come over and help us,’ is the voice from almost every quarter. After all that has been done, there are willing hearers, even in heathen countries, without a preacher ; numbers of children anxious to be taught, but without schools ; and even Christian societies, now but occasionally visited, asking for constant care and superintendence ; missionaries failing in their strength, from excessive labours, beseeching us not to be lightened of their portion of this sacred toil, but to be supplied with coadjutors, by whose aid they may proceed to the help of the destitute souls around them. The vineyard of the Lord lies before his labourers ; and we are thus called, by the force of principle, by the glow of feeling, by the power of pity, by the ardour of hope, by the sublime

scenes and prospects which the mighty operations of Providence among the nations of the earth now spread around us, by our loyalty, and by our love to Christ, to be ‘steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;’ and the more so, as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The income of the society during the year had amounted to \$217,388, being an increase of nearly \$37,000 over that of the preceding year.

The anniversary of the society in 1826 was a season of unusual solemnity. The joyous feelings excited by the great and growing prosperity of the missions were restrained and chastened by the melancholy intelligence which had been recently received from the West Indies. Five missionaries, most of whom had their wives and families with them, had taken their passage in the packet-boat from St. Kitts, where they had been attending the district meeting, to return to their several fields of labour. The vessel was wrecked at sea, and of the whole party, which consisted of the five missionaries, three of their wives, four children, and two servants, Mrs. Jones, wife of one of the missionaries, was the only person who escaped. The sufferers were all con-

nected with the Antigua station, which by this solemn and mysterious dispensation of Providence was deprived of all its missionaries "So heavy a stroke," says Mr. Watson, in reporting this calamity, "has not been sustained by any modern mission; and the committee can only bow in silence before the Lord of the whole earth, and mingle their own commiserations with those of the friends of the deceased, and of the afflicted societies by whom they were so greatly beloved, and among whom they had so successfully laboured.

Not long after this the Missionary Society was called to sustain another severe loss, in the death of Joseph Butterworth, Esq., a man of exemplary zeal and benevolence, who had long taken an active part in the management of its affairs.* He was the general treasurer of the society; and frequently, when its funds were embarrassed, made large advances of money without interest. Mr. Watson, at the request of the family, preached a funeral discourse on the occasion of his death, taking for his text Gal. i, 24, "*And they glorified God*

* He was a son of the Rev. John Butterworth, a Baptist minister, and author of the concordance which goes by his name; and brother-in-law to Dr. Adam Clarke.

in me." This sermon was afterward published.

The conference of 1826 was held in Liverpool, and immediately on its assembling, the preachers conferred on Mr. Watson the highest mark of their confidence and esteem. "This morning," says he, in writing to his wife, "the honour I sought not was laid upon me,—that of president. May I have grace to discharge its duties to the satisfaction of the brethren." Through the whole session his official conduct presented a remarkable admixture of Christian dignity and brotherly kindness. In one instance it was his painful duty to administer censure; and the impression produced by his remarks upon the aggravations and consequences of sin in a minister of the gospel, will not soon be effaced from the minds of those who witnessed the scene.

The commencement and conclusion of every conference are usually seasons of peculiar solemnity. When the preachers meet after an interval of twelve months, the places of some beloved and venerated men, who had long been recognized in those annual assemblies, are generally found to be empty. The ravages which have been made by death often awaken the most serious and tender emotions; and

the startling inquiry comes with power to many a heart,

“Who next shall be summon’d away,
My merciful God, is it I?”

When the last vote of the conference has been passed, and the journal is signed by the president and secretary, the preachers, the great body of whom are perfectly one in affection and judgment, prepare to separate, in the certain anticipation of never all meeting again till they appear before the Judge of quick and dead. After receiving the Lord’s supper together, and commending each other to God in earnest prayer, they depart to their several scenes of labour, often with tears, and always with mutual benedictions, and in the earnest hope of meeting in a world where

“Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.”

At the conclusion of the conference in Liverpool Mr. Watson prayed with great enlargement and fervour, and at considerable length. He prayed for the preservation of the preachers in their several journeyings; for the continuance of their health and lives; the success of their ministry through the year; the general prosperity of the work of God; the peace and harmony of the societies; and the

conversion to the faith of Christ of "a great multitude" of people in all parts of the land. The missionaries, "separated from their brethren," and labouring in different parts of the heathen world, and in the midst of great discouragements and trials, were particularly remembered, and commended to the blessing and merciful protection of God. There was one subject in this prayer which seemed to rest with peculiar weight upon Mr. Watson's mind, and to which he gave considerable prominence. It was the case of the preachers who at that time became supernumeraries. Several aged men, who had long borne the burden and heat of the day, and been accustomed to active service in various parts of the connection, were compelled by infirmities to retire from the labours of their itinerant ministry. With these venerable servants of Christ he appeared deeply to sympathize. Their circumstances were now greatly altered, and they were liable to strong and distressing temptations. In some instances they were likely to be straitened in their income, and means of subsistence; and in every case, to retire into comparative obscurity. They would, therefore, be in danger of considering themselves slighted, and of yielding to a querulous disposition. From this

he prayed that they might be preserved ; that the evening of life with them might be calm and tranquil ; their usefulness continued ; and that their lives of pious and honourable toil might be crowned with a peaceful end, and a glorious reward. The deep feeling which he manifested in this part of his prayer was admirably characteristic of the affection and respect with which he was accustomed to regard aged Christians, and especially aged ministers.

During the year of his presidency Mr. Watson still retained his connection with the Missionary Society, although the duties of the secretaryship ostensibly devolved upon other men.* In the month of October he repaired to Leeds, to assist at the anniversary of the auxiliary society of that district. His sermons and speeches produced their usual impression, though his health had again begun to fail, and he was in a very languid state. He bore the journey pretty well ; but preaching on Sunday, and both preaching and speaking on Monday, in a large chapel, quite laid him up, and he was confined to the house during the two following days. His friends advised him to rest

* The resident secretaries for this year were the Rev. Messrs. Morley, Mason, and Newstead

for some days longer; but he had engaged to preach at the dedication of a new chapel at Salford, and he was unwilling to disappoint his friends in that place. He accordingly went, and fulfilled his engagement in the best manner he was able; but there his strength again failed, so that he was unable, for some time, to bear the journey home to London.

Under all his bodily infirmities his mind retained all its activity and vigour. At the end of this year he published the fourth part of the "Institutes;" and in the early part of the following year the Annual Report of the Missionary Society for 1826. There had been a small decrease in the funds of the society during the year, in consequence of the deep commercial distress in which the country was then plunged; but in other respects the details of the Report were calculated to call forth expressions of gratitude, and to inspire the most animating hopes.

The following statements from this Report will give some idea of the extent of the society's operations at that time. The number of mission stations was 137; and the number of missionaries, exclusive of catechists, 180. The number of members in the foreign societies was 32,960, of whom 26,283 were negroes and

coloured persons in the West Indies. There were also upward of 11,000 children taught in schools connected with the mission stations in various parts of the world.

In the summer of 1827, Mr. Watson, accompanied by Mr. Bunting, visited Edinburgh, as directed by the conference, to meet the preachers stationed in Scotland. During his stay the anniversary of the auxiliary missionary society was held, and he lent his assistance on the occasion by preaching before the society, and delivering an address at the public meeting. Having finished his business in Scotland he returned to London, and from thence repaired to Cornwall, having been called upon to assist, in his official capacity, in the adjustment of some differences in one of the circuits. From Cornwall he sailed to Ireland, to preside at the Irish conference, which was held at Belfast. Here his ministry, his counsel, his conversation, and his entire spirit and example, were greatly admired by the preachers and friends, and were made a lasting blessing to many. He was often requested to visit Ireland again, but was prevented by ill health.

From Belfast he proceeded to Manchester, to attend the English conference. He had hoped to be able to visit his family before

meeting of conference, but time did not permit. Writing to Mrs. Watson, on his arrival at Manchester, he says, "Upon the whole I liked the trip to Ireland very much; but was glad enough to see the shores of England rising in the horizon. The pleasure would have been heightened had I been able to proceed direct home, instead of remaining here a month longer; but I must submit. There is much to be thankful for—preservation in travel, and a tolerable degree of health." Mr. Watson's general health at this time, though delicate, was better than it had been for some time previously.

Having presided in the preparatory committees, Mr. Watson, on the first day of conference resigned his office as president, in which he was succeeded by the Rev. John Stephens. As the ex-president, it fell to his lot to deliver the charge to the preachers who were that year received into full connection. He took for his text 2 Tim. i, 7, "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;*" and the discourse which he delivered was every way worthy of himself and of the occasion. It was listened to, by an immense congregation, with deep and earnest attention, and its publication

was requested by the unanimous vote of the conference.

Mr. Watson had now been one of the resident missionary secretaries for six years, beyond which period the rules of the connection did not allow him to continue in that office ; and as his health, though delicate, was now better than it had been for some time previously, he was himself anxious to resume the regular duties of the ministry, which he regarded as his proper calling. As might have been expected, the brethren in many places were anxious to have him stationed among them ; but the principal contest for his appointment was between the Birmingham circuit and that of Manchester South. After the claims of both these places had been duly weighed in the conference, it was determined that he should be sent to the latter place. He was succeeded in the office of missionary secretary by the Rev. Dr. Townley.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Watson enters on his ministry at Manchester—Connection with the Missionary Society—His character as a preacher and a pastor—Completion of his Theological Institutes—Presents the copyright to the Connection—Appointed Superintendent of the City-Road circuit, London—Publishes his Conversations for the Young—Rev. Samuel Entwisle—Wesleyan University at Middletown—Publication of his Life of Wesley—Theological and Biblical Dictionary—Appearance of the cholera in Engand—Watch-night—Letter to Mr. Edmondson—Missionary Report for 1831—Commences an Exposition of the New Testament—Conference of 1832—Mr. Watson's disinterestedness—Reappointed Missionary Secretary—Dr. A. Clarke—Mr. Watson's Farewell Service at the City-Road chapel.

MR. WATSON had now resided in London for eleven years, during which period he had formed many cordial attachments; his removal, therefore, awakened painful feelings in many minds as well as his own. At his departure some of his friends went to meet him at the hotel in Islington, where he and his family were waiting for the coach. When he saw them his philosophy quite forsook him; the tear glistened in his eye, his voice faltered, he could only utter the words, "I did not expect this mark of kindness;" and then turned aside to relieve his feelings by weeping.

He arrived safely at Manchester, and opened his commission on the following Sunday morn-

ing, by a discourse on Acts x, 29, "*Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for : I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me.*" His colleagues were the Rev. Messrs. John Hannah, Peter M'Owan, and William M. Bunting, with whom he laboured in happy unity and affection. By the congregations throughout the circuit he was received with every mark of satisfaction, and his preaching was made a lasting blessing to many.

In resuming the duties of the itinerant ministry Mr. Watson did not wholly sever his connection with the Missionary Society ; his name now stood on the Minutes as "honorary secretary" to that institution ; and he kept up a regular correspondence with its managers, and occasionally drew up official documents at their request. He also continued to labour on his "Theological Institutes," of which, during his residence in Manchester, he wrote a considerable part of the last volume.

These engagements, however, did not interfere with his attention to his duties as the superintendent of a circuit, in which he was diligent and exemplary. Though some of the country congregations were small, he never employed a substitute when his health allowed

him to attend to his own appointment.* The sermons which he preached in Manchester on the week-day evenings, as well as on Sundays, were thoroughly digested, rich in evangelical sentiment, and generally delivered with such holy fervour and energy as showed that they had been prepared with much prayer.

In those more private means of grace which are peculiar to the Methodist body, he shone with equal lustre as in the pulpit. In these he appeared not only as the gifted minister, but also as the devout Christian. In the regular quarterly visitations of the classes he endeavoured to ascertain the true spiritual state of each member ; and with all fidelity he

* Those innovations in Methodism, called *stations*, are unknown among our British brethren. *There* the large towns and cities are only the heads of *circuits*, embracing the neighbouring villages, which are supplied with preaching partly by the travelling, and partly by the local preachers. In this way the stronger societies are made to assist in bearing the burden of the weaker ones ; the gospel is statedly preached in places which under the *station* system would be wholly deprived of it ; and the conference preachers, making their regular rounds through the circuits, exercise, in the strict and *Methodistic* sense of the word, an *itinerant* ministry. There is no tendency toward *Congregationalism* among the British Wesleyan Methodists.

gave to each his portion of admonition counsel, or encouragement. He related his Christian experience with a simplicity and humility seldom equalled ; and he approached the footstool of the Almighty, when pouring out his soul in prayer, with extraordinary fervency and devotion. Indeed he possessed the *gift* and *spirit* of prayer in a degree of richness and constancy rarely to be met with. "He seemed," as one of his colleagues, the Rev. Dr. Hannah, well observes, "to possess an inexhaustible fund of sentiments and expressions adapted to every variety of wants, of suffering, and of blessing. A special unction often attended his prayers. His hearers were bowed and raised ; bowed under an overwhelming apprehension of the insignificance of the creature, and the majesty of the almighty Creator ; and raised to a solemn, yet delightful contemplation of the glory which covered the mercy-seat with healing light, and filled the heart with comfort inexpressible."

He was not only punctual in attending to his public engagements, but was also diligent in visiting the objects of his pastoral charge from house to house, paying special attention to children, and to the younger branches of religious families. He generally contrived to

spend one or two hours every day in the visitation of the sick. 'This branch of pastoral duty he discharged in the most faithful and affectionate manner. He spent sufficient time in his visits to enter calmly into conversation with the afflicted, endeavouring to gain their confidence, and to acquire a knowledge of their spiritual state, that he might give suitable consolation and advice, and unite with them in appropriate acts of confession, supplication, and thanksgiving. To those who were in distress he was particularly kind and soothing, opening to their views the promises of God, the perfect atonement of Christ, and the fulness of the divine mercy ; encouraging them to place an absolute reliance upon the divine faithfulness and love, and offering up prayers in their behalf, till they were enabled to rejoice in the favour of God, and in hope of future glory.

He attached just importance to the meetings of the different committees appointed to manage the affairs of Sunday schools and missionary and tract societies ; and that he and his brethren might have an opportunity of attending them, he reserved one night in the week free from preaching engagements.

Before he left Manchester, where he re-

mained two years, he published the two concluding parts of the "Theological Institutes." The completion of this work was to Mr. Watson an occasion of no little satisfaction and gratitude; it having cost him much labour and thought, and occupied his anxious attention for several years. His design in writing it was, to assist the junior preachers in their theological studies; and its publication supplied what had long been a desideratum in Methodism—a complete course of systematic theology founded on those views of Scripture which Mr. Wesley had embraced, and by preaching which he had been the instrument of, perhaps, the most important revival of religion since the days of the apostles.

Of this work it is altogether unnecessary that we give any particular account. It has now for many years been so well known, and justly admired, that both description and commendation are alike uncalled for; and we will only add the public estimate of Mr. Watson's mental vigour and theological attainments, high as it is, would be considerably increased, were it generally known that this, his great work, was written during intervals of time snatched from his other engagements and duties, and much of it while he was suffering

under severe bodily affliction, and in a state of extreme languor and exhaustion.

It had from the beginning been Mr. Watson's intention to present the copyright of this work to the Wesleyan connection; and the manner in which he did it displayed a delicacy and honour which are worthy of special record. When he first committed the work to the press, though his friends were sanguine as to its execution and sale, he had doubts concerning both; and hence, though money with him was not plentiful, and the details of business were foreign from his habits, he took upon himself the entire risk of publication, and offered the copyright to the connection when it had received the stamp of public approbation, and when the demand for it was such as to render it worthy of acceptance in a pecuniary point of view. As soon as the last part was printed off, he presented the entire work to the Wesleyan book committee.

At the conference of 1829, which was held at Sheffield, Mr. Watson preached a sermon on Acts xvii, 28, which, at the request of his brethren, was afterward printed. He also received their acknowledgments for the gift of the great work which he had just completed; and the following record appears in the Mi-

notes :—" That the cordial thanks of the conference are due to the Rev. Richard Watson, for his kind and generous gift of the copyright of his Theological Institutes to the Book Room."

At this conference a strong effort was made by the friends at Birmingham to secure Mr. Watson's appointment to that circuit, and he was himself of opinion that, all things considered, it was the most suitable place to which he could be sent; after a long debate, however, it was determined to appoint him to the superintendency of the London North circuit, of which City-Road was the head. His return to London was welcomed by a numerous circle of friends; and though the station was not one which he would have chosen for himself, on account of the onerous duties connected with it, which were sufficient to exercise the full strength of a man in robust health; yet he regarded the appointment as providential, and entered upon his labours with cheerful alacrity. His appearance at this time was sickly and languid; his constitution during his residence in Manchester had been evidently impaired by disease; but his intellectual powers were as vigorous as ever, his habits of activity were unabated, and his piety had acquired a greater

richness and maturity. He seemed to feel that the continuance of his life was a matter of extreme uncertainty ; and he lived, and conversed, and preached, as became a man who almost daily expected to be summoned to " give an account of his stewardship."

The office of honorary secretary to the Missionary Society, to which he had been appointed on his removal to Manchester, he continued to sustain after his return to London, and he rendered most efficient aid in the management of the society's affairs. He regularly attended the meetings of the committee ; prepared some of the most important official documents ; superintended the preparatory studies of some of the missionaries ; and generally took a part in the services connected with their ordination.

Notwithstanding the pressure of his duties as the superintendent of an important circuit, and the attention which he was called to devote to concerns of the missions, Mr. Watson, by his unremitting diligence, still found time to execute various literary projects. In the spring of 1830 he published his " Conversations for the Young," a work of great utility, which he had written in his intervals of time during the autumn and winter, and upon which

he had bestowed more than ordinary care. It is designed to assist the young in the profitable reading of the Holy Scriptures ; and contains, in a series of twenty-four conversations between a youthful inquirer and his teacher, a large mass of important information, being, in fact, a complete introduction to the study of the Bible.

A young preacher, (the Rev. Samuel Entwisle,) for whom Mr. Watson had a strong regard, was at this time languishing under the power of disease, and apparently hastening to "the house appointed for all living." He had been compelled to leave his circuit, and was now at the house of his father, the Rev. Joseph Entwisle, at Bath. To encourage his dying friend under the pressure of his sufferings, Mr. Watson, who, from having himself long been a subject of severe suffering, knew how to sympathize with the afflicted, addressed him an affectionate letter, from which we give a single extract :—

"The measure of affliction, and the duration of suffering are in the hands of Him who cannot err ; and he will give strength for the day. It is lawful, with submission, to make these matters of prayer ; and greatly does God honour prayer, because it is an expression of

trust in him. But the great thing is, a perfectly resigned will, grounded upon the full conviction that good is the will of the Lord. Then we shall say,—

‘Thankful I take the cup from thee,
Prepared and mingled by thy skill.’

Then shall we feel that we have only to live for the present moment. Now may you be enabled to say, ‘Now in this pang, in this interval of ease, in this hour of languor, in this visitation of joy, in all, may I glorify my Lord; and by all may his will and work in me be done!’ I commend you earnestly, at this distance, in prayer to the care and blessing of your heavenly Father. The earth which you are leaving is a mere vanity, as you know, without God; all that it is more, it is made by him; and in heaven God will be all in all. You will know more, love more there; be employed in a higher service; and will have this privilege,—you will escape to land before your friends, triumph before them, and see the Lord before them.

‘Thrice-blessed, bliss inspiring-hope!’

May it fully triumph over fear in you! You will not tread the wine-press alone. Parents, and brothers, and friends, all of whom have an

interest in God, will aid you, are aiding you by their prayers. Above all, the Lord Jehovah is your everlasting strength. God be merciful unto you, and bless you, and lift upon you the eternal light of his countenance !”

This whole letter was beautifully characteristic of the writer's views and spirit, and was made a great blessing to the dying minister for whose benefit it was written. It contained sentiments to which his heart responded ; he read it often, with feelings of pure and hallowed joy ; he placed it in his Bible ; and often said to his parent, when speaking of his spiritual state and prospects, “ Father, I should like to take this letter with me to heaven.”

At the conference of 1830 Mr. Watson was requested to write a life of Mr. Wesley, to be published in a cheap form, adapted for popular use, for the benefit of such persons as were unable to procure the voluminous work of Mr. Moore. Believing he had no talent for biographical composition, he was at first somewhat reluctant to comply with this request. On his return to London, however, he immediately began to collect materials for the work ; and so intent was he on the accomplishment of his design, that he often deprived himself of necessary rest, and employed a considera-

ble part of the night in arranging his materials, and preparing the work for the press. His lamp might sometimes be seen burning in his study as late as three o'clock in the morning.

While he was engaged in this work he received an invitation from this country to fill the Professorship of Belles Lettres and Moral Philosophy in the Wesleyan University, which had just been established at Middletown, Connecticut. In his letter declining the appointment he says, "The honour you do me, in inviting me to a chair, I duly appreciate, and feel myself very unworthy of. To belles lettres I have no pretension; moral philosophy I have studied, and think it a most important department, as the source of most misleading error, or of important truth when kept upon its true principles, both theological and philosophic. Being, however, fifty years old, and having a feeble constitution, I do not think it would be prudent in me, were I otherwise better qualified, to encounter the fatigues of an unaccustomed duty, and a foreign climate. Brethren I know I should find, and a candour of treatment; but I can only offer my best wishes that you may suitably and efficiently fill up so important a department."

Mr. Watson's Life of Wesley was published

on the 1st of June, 1830, and became immediately and deservedly popular. It was not a mere abridgment of previous works, but contained a large amount of original matter; and the author having had the advantage of consulting unpublished papers, not known to preceding biographers, was enabled to place some particulars in a more satisfactory light. The work was written in an elegant, easy, and perspicuous style, and its continued popularity confirms the judgment pronounced upon it by its earliest readers.

At the conference which met at Bristol in 1831, Mr. Watson received the cordial thanks of his brethren for the able and satisfactory manner in which he had fulfilled the request of the preceding conference, respecting the Life of Mr. Wesley, and for his generous gift of the copyright to the Book Room.

As soon as his Life of Wesley was published, Mr. Watson was requested by the book committee to compile a Biblical and Theological Dictionary. He had for some years been making preparations for publishing such a work, intending to apply the profits arising from its sale to the benefit of his family in the event of his decease. Of this fact, however, the committee were not then aware, and Mr.

Watson, without informing them of it, immediately relinquished the idea of appropriating the profits for his family, and began to arrange his materials for the press. The work was published in parts, the first of which appeared in the beginning of October, and fully justified the expectations which had been formed respecting it. When the publication was somewhat advanced, and the demand for it was extensive, he was urgently requested to accept some remuneration for his services, especially as his original intentions as to pecuniary advantages were then discovered; but this he peremptorily refused, declaring that unless he might be allowed to finish the work gratuitously, for the benefit of the Wesleyan body, he would decline all future connection with the publication, and the committee might complete it as they pleased. At that time he cherished the design, if his life should be prolonged, of writing some other work for the benefit of his widow and children, should he be removed from them.

In the fall of 1831 the country was filled with terror and alarm by the appearance of the Asiatic cholera, which, after extending its ravages through Hindostan, Persia, Turkey, Russia. Poland, Germany, &c., had now bro-

ken out in the north of England, and its extension through the land was generally anticipated. The mystery connected with this disease seemed to mark it out as a special visitation of the Almighty; and in this light Mr. Watson viewed it. As soon as it appeared in the country, a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, was appointed for the congregation and society connected with the City-Road chapel; on which occasion a prayer meeting was held at eight in the morning, another at noon, and a third at seven in the evening. At the second of these meetings, Mr. Watson, after a suitable hymn had been sung, read, as appropriate to the solemn occasion, the twenty-fourth chapter of the first book of Samuel. He then engaged in prayer, in which he confessed, with expressions of humiliation and shame, the sins of individuals, of the church, and of the nation; acknowledged the just liability of the land to the severest inflictions of Almighty wrath; and earnestly pleaded with God, that his mercy might yet spare a guilty people. He prayed that those who might fall by the scourge, might be prepared by divine grace for the awful event; and he besought "the God of all grace," in honour of his Son, and in the exercise of his sovereign compas-

sion, to sanctify the judgments of his rod by a general and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit, so that the people might everywhere return unto him with penitential sorrow and praying faith. The hymns which he selected and the congregation sung, during the subsequent part of the meeting, were highly appropriate; and the entire service was such as can scarcely ever be forgotten by those who engaged in it. The people seemed to resign themselves absolutely into the hands of their Saviour, prepared either to live or die, as he might determine. The following verse was sung with intense feeling:—

“Jesus, to thee we fly
From the devouring sword;
Our city of defence is nigh;
Our help is in the Lord.
Or, if the scourge o’erflow,
And laugh at innocence,
Thine everlasting arms, we know,
Shall be our souls’ defence.”

When the disease broke out in London, Mr. Watson preached in the City-Road chapel on Amos iii, 6, “*Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*” and endeavoured to impress the congregation, and especially the pious part of them, with a conviction

that all calamities are under the immediate control and direction of the Lord, who has engaged that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

In this spirit he attended the annual watch-night in the City-Road chapel. The exercises, as usual, commenced at nine o'clock, and continued till after twelve; the congregation thus passing from one year into another in religious worship, and in those serious meditations which are suggested by the rapid flight of time, the approach of eternity, and the remembrance of departed days. The occasion, which is always a solemn one, was now rendered increasingly so by the prevalence of the pestilence; and a deep seriousness seemed to be impressed upon every countenance. The services were concluded by Mr. Watson, who was so seriously indisposed as to be unable to remain in the chapel during the whole of the exercises; he therefore came from his room to the pulpit, where he spoke "as a dying man to dying men." It was the last meeting of the kind he was permitted to attend.

A letter written at the close of the year 1831, to the Rev. W. M. Bunting, shows his deep sense of the responsibility connected with the sacred office, and the feelings with which

he contemplated the termination of his public labours. He observes, "My health is very feeble, and I have hard work to keep on ; yet I never loved my work so much, and, I trust, never laboured more to do it in the solemn view of eternity. One thing I feel, standing upon the close of active life, (for much longer of efficiency cannot be hoped for by me,) that I have read, prayed, preached, in all far below the true standard of ministerial devotedness ; and that, if life were again to begin, I should endeavour, at least, to enter more fully into the spirit of the only work on earth which directly connects itself with 'glory, honour, and immortality.' I seem rather to have been in a dream than broad awake. Still these humbling thoughts serve to heighten the infinite grace which gives the sweet sense of acceptance ; and make me feel more powerfully the emphasis of, ' By grace are ye saved.' "

The following is an extract of a letter which he addressed a few weeks after this to his old friend, the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson :—

" London, February 14th, 1832.

" MY DEAR SIR,—I could not let this opportunity pass without saying that I sympathize with you in your invalid state of health, which

I hope is but temporary ; and I pray that you may be spared yet many years to labour, both with tongue and pen, for the good of the church. My own health is miserably uncertain, and leaves me little hope of long active service. However, I am resolving, by God's grace, to work while it is called to-day. Necessity lately took me to Leicester and Liverpool. Friend Carr and I had several chats about you and old times. William Rawson is dead. Mr. Henshaw, at Liverpool, becomes a supernumerary next year. So the world passes away, and we, in different modes, along with it. But brighter scenes are before us ; of which may we always have an unclouded prospect ! How easy it is to travel the space which has intervened since you and I spent so agreeable a year at Leicester ! so truly a span is all past time. Well, I look back upon that year with pleasure, as it introduced me to your acquaintance, and I hope friendship ; and I have been always happy to acknowledge that I owe my first enlargement of mind, as to men and books, to your intelligent and free conversation. For this I am still grateful.

“Mrs. Watson has been confined to the house by rheumatism for nearly five months ;

so that we have had a sick winter ; and now the cholera is surrounding us. But it is ‘the arrow that flieth by day ;’ and supposes an *archer* and an *aim* ; so we rest in wisdom and love infinite. A dark cloud hangs over this metropolis ; but the plague is one of the signs of the latter day.”

At this period he suffered greatly from affliction, and was induced, by the urgent solicitations of his friends, to consult one or two of the most eminent physicians in London. He had often pursued a similar course before, but without any permanent advantage ; and he was not more successful in the present instance. On his return home he remarked, in his good-natured and humorous manner, that after being duly questioned respecting his symptoms, he was informed with all due and professional gravity, that his disease was a derangement of the biliary system ; and that he must carefully avoid all such kinds of food as were difficult of digestion, &c. ; information which he had received a thousand times, and for which he again expressed his obligations, and paid the accustomed fee. His days were now numbered ; his disease was such as no medicine could reach ; and the highest professional

skill could only secure for him an occasional alleviation of his pain.

About this time was published the Report of the Wesleyan Missions for 1831 ; from which it appeared that the income of the society had amounted to \$229,375 ; that the number of mission stations was 156 ; the missionaries 218 ; the salaried catechists and teachers, employed chiefly in the day-schools, about 160 ; the gratuitous teachers in the Sunday and daily mission schools, upward of 1400 ; the number of scholars, children and adults, in the mission schools, 25,420 ; and the number of members in religious society, under the charge of the missionaries, exclusive of those in Ireland, 42,757. The concluding part of the Report was written by Mr. Watson, in his usual happy style.

In the spring of this year (1832) the last part of his Theological Dictionary was published, and the work was issued in a complete form. The sale had already been very encouraging ; and its author lived to see the third edition rapidly passing through the press.

Soon after the commencement of his ministry in the City-Road chapel, in 1829, he commenced a course of lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, which many of his hearers re-

quested him to publish. In consequence of the frequent interruptions of his ministry, occasioned by the failure of his health, it appeared doubtful whether he would be able to complete the delivery of the course before the time of his removal; and he was therefore strongly inclined to fill up his plan, and publish the whole without delay. He soon afterward, however, altered his purpose, and formed the resolution, if his life should be spared, to attempt an exposition, not of the Epistle to the Romans only, but of the entire New Testament. "I do not," said he to Mr. Jackson, "make great pretensions to learning; but I think I can judge of the critical labours of learned men,—give the English reader the *results* of their elaborate disquisitions and inquiries,—and show the theological bearing of the sacred text. It shall be a principle with me to evade no difficulties, however formidable, but to grapple with them in the best manner that I am able."

Having formed his plan, he entered upon its execution with an energy and a vigour which, considering his personal sufferings, and the enfeebled state of his health, were truly surprising. He devoted to it every hour he could command, and so rapid and satisfactory

was his progress that he believed he should be able to go through the whole New Testament in three years, should his life be spared so long; but he often remarked, "If I die before the work is finished, I shall not lose my labour; for the spiritual benefit to my own mind is worth all the labour."

The conference of 1832 was held at Liverpool, at a time when the cholera prevailed in that town to an alarming extent, and many fears were entertained that the preachers would not escape that terrible scourge. During the week preceding the conference a day of special prayer was observed, and meetings of intercession were held, when many fervent supplications were presented to the throne of grace that the ravages of the pestilence might cease, the lives of the preachers be preserved, and the health of the town restored. Mr. Watson took a prominent part in these services, and prayed with a power and importunity which seemed more than human, and which made so deep an impression on the minds of those who were present, as to be a subject of general remark for a long time afterward. The voice of prayer was heard, the disease soon began to abate, and the preachers, and the families by whom they

were kindly entertained, were all mercifully preserved.

Mr. Watson's appearance at this time was such as seriously affected his friends. His strength was greatly reduced; his countenance was unusually pale and sickly; and he was in almost constant pain. His spirit, however, was remarkably pious and cheerful; his conversation was spiritual, instructive, and edifying; and it was evident that he "walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and was anxious to bring all around him into the same holy and happy temper. His weakness prevented his taking a leading part in the business of conference; but he sometimes expressed his sentiments on subjects which he deemed important. He also preached occasionally, without much sensible diminution of his wonted energy; and his admirable sermons, and solemn public intercessions can never, by those who heard them, cease to be remembered with reverential and tender interest.

Before the meeting of this conference Mr. Watson executed a deed, by which he conveyed to trustees, in behalf of the connection, the copyright of all his published works except his "Conversations for the Young," which he

retained for the benefit of his family. This eminently liberal and disinterested conduct was gratefully acknowledged by his brethren in a resolution of the conference, which was ordered to be inserted in the printed Minutes.

As Mr. Watson's strength was now so greatly impaired as to render him unable to discharge the duties of a travelling preacher, the conference complied with the request of the missionary committee, and appointed him to the office of resident secretary, with the Rev. Messrs. James and Beecham. It was hoped that, by avoiding the night air, and being relieved from the frequent necessity of week-night preaching, he would be able for several years to serve the mission cause, and edify the church by his writings. But his days were numbered, and his work was almost done.

Dr. Adam Clarke was present at this conference, and took an active part in its affairs. When the business of the conference was concluded, he said to Mr. Watson, as they shook hands together, "Brother Watson, I advise you, with as little delay as possible, to leave this town. The cholera, though it has abated, still prevails in Liverpool; and what God is about to do with the people here is only

known to himself." This appears to have been the last interview between these eminent men, who were then evidently under considerable alarm because of the judgments of the Almighty. In less than five months from this time both of them, one

"Worn by slowly rolling years"

of affliction and disease, and the other

"Broke by sickness in a day,"

were committed to the silent tomb.

On his return to London Mr. Watson began to prepare for his removal from the City-Road to the residence which he had formerly occupied when engaged at the mission house. He resigned his pastoral charge with strong and deep emotions ; for his attachment to the friends in the circuit generally, and to the society at the City-Road in particular, was very great. Many of them had shown him marks of affection and respect, had sympathized with him in his afflictions, and done every thing in their power to alleviate his sufferings ; and the years he had spent with them, he stated to have been among the happiest in his life.

On the last sabbath evening before his removal he did not preach, but met the society

in the City-Road chapel, and delivered his parting admonitions to those who, for the past three years, had been the people of his charge. It was a solemn season. His apostolic address was truly affecting, and seemed to be attended with a special blessing to all present. He dwelt upon the nature, benefits, and obligations of Christian fellowship; the signs which indicate a church's prosperous or declining state; intermixed with many solemn, tender, and faithful exhortations to a steady perseverance in the course of public and private duty. He expressed the pleasure he had received from the regular attendance of the church members at their several class meetings, and the other means of grace; and lamented that during the past year, in consequence of his frequent indisposition, he had not been able to fill his important station, as the superintendent of the circuit, as he had wished. He appeared like an affectionate father taking leave of his family. Recollecting the uncertainty of his own life, and the multitudes of devout people who had formerly worshipped in that chapel, many of whom he had known, and whose spirits were then in the paradise of God, he called upon the congregation to unite with him in

singing the following fine hymn of Mr. Charles Wesley,—

“Come, let us join our friends above,
That have obtain'd the prize ;
And on the eagle wings of love
To joys celestial rise.

Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone ;
For all the servants of our King
In earth and heaven are one

“One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow ;
Part of his host have cross'd the flood.
And part are crossing now.

“Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly ;
And we are to the margin come,
And we expect to die ;
His militant embodied host,
With wishful looks we stand,
And long to see that happy coast,
And reach the heavenly land.

“Our old companions in distress
We haste again to see,
And eager long for our release
And full felicity :

Even now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before ;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore.

“ Our spirits too shall quickly join,
Like theirs with glory crown’d,
And shout to see our Captain’s sign,
To hear his trumpet sound.
O that we now might grasp our Guide !
O that the word were given !
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven.”

A prayer, remarkable for its power and importance, closed this memorable and most affecting service, and with it Mr. Watson’s ministry in that favoured place. “ Little,” said an old disciple who was present on the occasion, “ did many of us think, that he was then occupying for the *last* time that pulpit in which he had so often ministered to thousands the word of eternal life.”

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Watson resumes his duties as Missionary Secretary—Deaths of Dr. Adam Clarke and Rev. T. Stanley—Mr. Watson's account of the state of his health at this time—He preaches his last sermon—Death of Rev. John James, one of the Missionary Secretaries—Mr. Watson compelled by increasing affliction to desist from writing his Exposition—Severity of his sufferings—Interesting notices of his last days—His death and funeral.

MR. WATSON entered upon his labours as secretary for the missions, (to adopt the expression employed by his colleague Mr. James, in a letter to Mr. Bunting,) “in fine style ;” full of zeal and love, and anxiously solicitous to promote with his utmost powers the great cause to which he was once more officially and exclusively devoted ; with a deepened piety and mellowed character, and with graces evidently matured by sanctified affliction.—There was but one alloy,—the fears of his friends that his health and life were in no ordinary degree precarious ; fears which, alas ! proved to be but too well grounded.

The year upon which Mr. Watson had now entered was one of the most melancholy in the annals of Wesleyan Methodism for the removal of men of high ministerial character and talent from their labours in Christ's militant

church on earth. Scarcely had the preachers time to repair to their new appointments before an unexampled scene of mortality was opened among them. No less than *seven* of the preachers stationed in London died in six months. The first that was called away was the truly venerable Dr. Adam Clarke ; a man respected by the whole Christian church for his uncommon erudition, his piety, zeal, apostolical simplicity, and ministerial usefulness. He died of cholera, calmly resting in the Saviour whom he loved, and had long preached, on Sunday, August 28. The Rev. Thomas Stanley, superintendent of one of the London circuits, was next called to his final reward. On the 9th of October he was walking in the streets, in his usual health, when he sunk upon the causeway, and instantly expired. The effect produced by the sudden removal of such men upon the susceptible mind of Mr. Watson, himself in a state of increasing weakness and affliction, may be easily conceived.

Under great feebleness and constant suffering he nevertheless attended the mission house daily, and continued to discharge the duties of his office. He also regularly attended the committee appointed to manage the affairs of the Wesleyan Book-room ; but he

shortened his visits to his friends, and greatly as he enjoyed the conversation of his brethren, no entreaties could induce him to prolong his stay when the business of the committees was discharged, so intent was he on completing his Exposition of the New Testament. To finish that work seemed to be the prevailing desire of his heart.

At this time the Methodists in Hull were engaged in the erection of an additional chapel in that populous town, and were anxious to secure Mr. Watson's services at the dedication, which was expected to take place early in the following spring. In answer to their application he says,—

“London, October 23, 1832.

“I am an invalid, just able to do the indoor work of this office; but my strength is gone. My voice is cracked, by a complaint of the larynx, and my health very uncertain. I have therefore declined all engagements from home; and those which I have upon the plans in London, through sudden attacks, I frequently do not fulfil. This is my *trial*. May I have grace to submit to it with cheerfulness, and be purified in the fire! I must now pass away from the more active scenes of the

church, and from the public eye ; and I submit, praying that those who are spared to work in the vineyard may have large success. For myself, I shall be glad to do a little behind the scenes while I am spared ; but this is all I can look for, according to the aspect of my present circumstances."

On the morning of Sunday, the 28th of October, Mr. Watson attended his appointment at Hinde-street chapel, when from the words, "*Thy Spirit is good ; lead me into the land of uprightness,*" Psalm cxliii, 10, he delivered an eloquent and impressive discourse, which proved to be his last. When he entered the pulpit he was exceedingly unwell, and his emaciated appearance deeply affected the congregation, many of whom were painfully apprehensive that his end was near. As he proceeded in the services, however, he seemed to forget his infirmities, and his ministry that morning was made a special blessing to his hearers. He was in a state of great suffering when the service concluded ; and a friend who resided near the chapel pressed him to stay and take some refreshment before he attempted to return to his house ; but he was desirous to reach home without delay, and

therefore declined the kind invitation. As the congregation retired, many an individual lingered to gaze upon the wasted form of their esteemed pastor, not a few of them "sorrowing" for the probability that "they should see his face no more."

A few days after this effort, and while his health still remained unimproved, his feelings received another shock by the sudden and unexpected death of the Rev. John James, one of his esteemed colleagues in the missionary secretaryship, and a man for whom he had long cherished a sincere and affectionate friendship. On Sunday morning, November 4, Mr. James appeared in his usual health, and at family worship gave out the hymn in which this impressive stanza is found,

"Whisper thy love into my heart,
Warn me of my approaching end;
And then I joyfully depart,
And then I to thy arms ascend."

In the evening he preached at the City-Road chapel, when he betrayed signs of languor, and his mind seemed to be occasionally confused. During the night he was attacked with apoplexy, and remained in a state of stupor, deprived of the power of speech till the following Tuesday, when he expired. Mr. Wat-

son felt his loss very severely. He felt too how precarious was his own state, and the solemnities of death and eternity now engaged his constant attention. He was confined to his house at the time of Mr. James' funeral, and was too ill to pay the last mark of respect to his lamented colleague, by following his remains to the grave.

Mr. Watson at this time not only considered his recovery as hopeless, but he began to be apprehensive that his end was nearer than he had anticipated. He had now proceeded with his Exposition as far as the tenth chapter of Luke; and being fully persuaded that he should never live to complete the work, he passed over the remaining chapters of Luke, as well as the whole of John and the Acts, and entered at once upon the Epistle to the Romans. Before he had finished the third chapter of the Romans his strength failed, and he was compelled to desist from all further attempts to explain those sacred oracles which had been for so many years his delight and study. He closed his labours, as a theological writer, with his note on Rom. iii, 22, 23, which is intended to explain the method of a sinner's justification before God, through faith in the sacrificial blood of Christ; and the effi-

cacy of the atonement which he there so forcibly inculcates, he happily realized during the few remaining weeks of his suffering life.

From this time his strength rapidly declined, and the pain which he often endured was fearful and overwhelming. All that medical skill could do was attempted in vain. The disease remained in undiminished power, and his case became peculiarly distressing. He had, indeed, intervals of comparative ease, but his paroxysms of pain became increasingly severe. They sometimes rose to agony, and continued, with scarcely any abatement, for twelve or fourteen hours. Such, however, was the energy of his mind, strengthened and sustained by the truth and grace of his almighty Saviour, that his patience and self-possession never forsook him. "I have seen him," says Dr. Hunter, his esteemed medical attendant and friend, "in such a state of suffering that nature could not have endured the slightest augmentation of his pain, but must have fainted under the pressure; and his cry was, not so much that the chastisement might be withdrawn, as that it might be overruled to the improvement of his piety. 'Let it be sanctified,' was his constant prayer: 'O God, let it be sanctified.'"

While he was in this state of affliction, waiting for the final summons, the great question of West India emancipation, in which for many years Mr. Watson had taken a great interest, was approaching its crisis; and in this hopeful state of things Mr. Buxton wrote to him, requesting his advice as to the plan to be adopted. Feeble as he was he called for his desk, and wrote a long and valuable letter in reply. The writing was so tremulous that it was a matter of some difficulty to decipher it, but with some assistance from himself it was transcribed and forwarded. Just as he had finished the letter a friend called to see him, to whom he remarked, with considerable feeling, "I am now a dying man, but it is a privilege to have lived to see the time when the day of liberty begins to dawn upon those poor oppressed people in the West Indies."

Mr. Watson was now confined to his sick room, life was ebbing out apace, and the time was at hand that he must die. He had a "great fight of affliction" to endure, and his religious principles were put to the severest test. In the time of comparative health death was not always to Mr. Watson a subject of the most agreeable contemplation. The *circumstances* and the *pain* of dying somewhat alarmed

him ; and he shrank from the prospect of the convulsive and mortal pang which he apprehended might prove so fearful. But as the time drew near he was blessedly prepared and strengthened both for the period of sickness, and the final conflict, and he was more than conqueror at last. The death bed of the just has seldom been more honoured than in his case ; and perhaps the closing scene of no saint's life ever furnished lessons of richer instruction. Those who witnessed the scene can never forget it.

The following account of Mr. Watson's last days has been compiled from the statements furnished by those who visited him during his illness, and especially by members of his own family who attended him night and day.

The last month of his life was marked by uncommon calmness of spirit. From the time when he gave up all expectation of recovery he manifested, both in his spirit and language, the most perfect resignation to the divine will. His was not a sullen and compulsory submission to an unavoidable fate, but a deliberate exercise of Christian faith and patience. He *resigned* his body to the tomb,—his soul to God ; and in death only made that sacrifice complete, in the spirit of which he had previously lived.

He remarked on several occasions, "I could have wished to live a few years longer, to finish some works and designs of usefulness which I contemplated; but the Lord can do without any of us;" adding, "I have often admired the perfect resignation of David, when he said to Zadok, 'Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.' So I say, If the Lord has no delight in me, here I am, let him do to me what seemeth good to him." His constant language was, "I have no wish either to live or die, but that the will of God may be done;" and on one occasion, when a member of his family expressed a hope of his recovery, he replied, with great sweetness, "It is the anxiety of affection, without any basis of reason to rest upon."

"It was my father's constant practice," observes Mrs. Dixon,* "when he and my mother were prevented by sickness from attending public worship on the sabbath, to read with her in the forenoon the whole of the Church

* Mr. Watson's daughter married the Rev. James Dixon, now (1841) president of the Wesleyan conference.

service, including the psalms, the epistle, and the collect for the day. My mother read the litany, while my father, devoutly kneeling, responded with the deepest and most fervent devotion. In the evening he selected a sermon, (generally one of Mr. Wesley's,) to be read to him; and then, with peculiar feeling and solemnity, repeated one of our hymns, and concluded with prayer.

“On Sunday, December 16, a day never to be forgotten, he went through the liturgical service in the forenoon as above described. In the afternoon he exclaimed, ‘Another silent sabbath! This is the sixth Sunday that I have been prevented by illness from lifting up my voice in the sanctuary!’ Then handing me the hymn-book, he said, ‘Read me some of these blessed hymns: I find them very refreshing.’ He then selected the following:—

- ‘O God, of good, the unfathom’d sea;’
- ‘Great God, indulge my humble claim;’
- ‘With glory clad, with strength array’d;’
- ‘The earth and all her fulness owns;’
- ‘O Sun of righteousness, arise;’
- ‘Join all the glorious names.’

In the evening I read, at his request, Mr. Wesley’s sermon on ‘The Way to the Kingdom.’

As I proceeded he exclaimed, 'How strong; yet how admirably simple! How beautifully clear and perspicuous! How forcible and convincing! No man ever saw the "way to the kingdom" more clearly than Wesley, and no man ever made that way so plain to others. The more I study his writings the more I admire them.' After reading a hymn, he prayed for nearly an hour, with astonishing and overwhelming power and energy, remembering not only his family individually, and pleading, nay, wrestling powerfully with God on their behalf, but also the church in general, and especially our department of it, with an intensity of feeling and earnestness of supplication remarkably impressive and affecting."

On Tuesday, December 18, he was visited by Mrs. Bulmer, the gifted authoress of "Messiah's Kingdom," who says, "He looked much emaciated, but he was cheerful, as usual, and the frame of his mind deeply spiritual and heavenly. He spoke with great calmness of the probable issue of his affliction; and added, 'I have not now to learn, for the first time, that all is right and best, and as it should be, under the divine disposal,—whether restoration to health shall be vouchsafed to me, for further usefulness, or whether the continuance

of severe pain shall shortly terminate my sufferings by death.' He then discoursed delightfully on the subject of a special providence, and on the many opportunities he had enjoyed of testing the truth of that doctrine in his personal experience. 'God,' said he, 'in the wise economy of his government, has provided for the answer of prayer.' He instanced such answers given to himself, especially as connected with his ministerial labours, when strength and refreshment had been remarkably vouchsafed to him in the hour of need, appealing, at the same time, to Mrs. Watson for the confirmation of his statements on this interesting point."

"During his illness," says Mrs. Dixon, "my father frequently repeated the following striking saying of Hooker:—'Since I owe thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take thine own time; I submit to it. Let not mine, O Lord, but let thy will be done!' When in great pain he would often quote this passage from Jeremiah, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses; and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?'"

While in health he was never remarkably communicative on the subject of personal reli-

gion ; but he now became as simple and open as a child : nor had he been accustomed to give vent to his feelings by tears,—generally endeavouring to repress his emotions ; but he now yielded fully to the feelings of his heart, and when conversing on religious subjects, tears of deep humiliation, intermingled with sacred joy, often flowed in copious streams from his eyes.

For some weeks Mr. Watson suffered greatly from periodical attacks of pain, to which he was subject during the latter stage of his complaint ; and one of these paroxysms was so severe and protracted that it was feared his feeble frame would scarcely be able to endure another such attack.

“On Sunday, December 23,” says Mrs. Dixon, “my dear father was free from acute pain, but in a state of great exhaustion, from previous suffering. He seemed to be fully aware of his danger ; but his mind was perfectly tranquil. Observing me weeping bitterly, he said, ‘Compose yourself, my dear keep your mind calm : commit the matter to Him who knows, not only what is right, but what is best. My flesh and my heart fail, but God is my rock. I know that my Redeemer liveth ; and that when he shall appear, I shall

appear with him. Yes ; I shall see him as he is.' On my expressing a hope that the disorder had passed its crisis, and that he would from that time begin to recover, he said, 'Your affection makes you sanguine ; but I wish neither to hope nor to fear, since He in whose hands I am knows best when to call his people to himself.' In the evening of the same day he requested me to read from the supplement a few of the hymns on the nativity, remarking that many of them were exceedingly striking and beautiful. While I was reading, he responded to the sentiments contained in them with great fervour, and dwelt much on the majesty of the mercy of God in devising so magnificent and glorious a scheme of salvation. I then read those beautiful translations from the German, commencing

'Commit thou all thy griefs,'

and

'Give to the winds thy fears ;'

which he said comforted him greatly."

Having felt several unfavourable symptoms, he had remarked during the day, that he feared he might have a relapse. His apprehensions were realized. He passed the night in violent pain, and continued in great agony until Monday evening, when he experienced some re-

lief. To Mr. Beecham, who called on him in the course of the day, he said, "All prospect of my recovery is gone. This return of pain proves that the cause of my affliction remains. I have no hope now. There is no rational ground of hope left. Nothing now remains for me but to address myself to the great work of preparing to suffer and die."

On the following day he was sufficiently free from pain to converse without difficulty. Early in the morning he sent for his daughter; and when she entered the room he smiled sweetly, and said, "My dear, this is Christmas-day. This is the blessed morning on which Christ broke upon this dark, dreary world, when

‘Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheering beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.’

O, what a blessed Saviour! And here he is, ever at hand, to sustain and comfort helpless man, and gild the dark and gloomy hours of pain and languor with bright hopes of immortal felicity."

He was visited on the morning of this day by Mr. Beecham, who says, "I was no sooner seated by him than he began: 'Well, you see we are at length thrown back on those great

principles which we preach: "Life is yours;" "death is yours;" "things present;" "things to come;" "all things work together for good to them that love God." Now, here are two points: first, Are these things so? and,——have you an interest in them? Having paused, as if in solemn consideration of these questions, he then said, with strong feeling, 'Yes, these things are so; these principles are true; and, blessed be God, I have an interest in them; but it is all through the blessed Spirit.' On my remarking, that it was a glorious reward for the faithful minister of Jesus Christ, in the season of deep affliction and suffering, to prove, as he did, the reality and consoling power of the great truths he had spent his life in maintaining and enforcing, he replied, with emphasis, 'Yes, a minister has higher enjoyments and privileges than Christians in general; but he is exposed to greater temptation. His is an awful responsibility; and greater is the guilt of any unfaithfulness in him. I feel these things to be so.' He then dwelt on his own unworthiness, and the abasing sense he felt of the worthlessness of his very best performances, and said his only hope, his only refuge, was in the pure atonement of Christ. He proceeded to enlarge on

the sufficiency of that atonement ; and showed what an infinite mercy it is that we have such a resource, and that we know what use to make of it. Then placing his attenuated hands together, and looking up to heaven, with his eyes partly closed, while his quivering lip marked the deep feeling of his soul, he quoted the following lines :—

‘His offering pure we call to mind,
There on the golden altar laid,
Whose Godhead with the manhood join’d,
For every soul atonement made ;
And have what’er we ask of God,
Through faith in that all-saving blood.’

Then pausing, and looking for a few moments unutterable things, he added, with uncommon pathos,—

‘I the chief of sinners am ;
But Jesus died for me.’

“ It was the following morning, if I remember right, that he formally gave up all public business. He had told me, some days before, that he wanted to talk with me on a few points, as soon as he was able ; and being comparatively easy that day when I called on him, he laid on the table a small portfolio, in which he kept papers relating to the missions ; and opening it, showed me what he

had been writing in reference to matters which he had previously deliberated on; telling me I must now take up those subjects where he had broken off, and must finish them. After further conversation, on my preparing to leave him, I gathered up only the papers we had been examining; when, taking them out of my hand, he placed them with the others in the portfolio; and folding it up, said, 'Here, take all together. If I get better, you know, I can take it back again; and if not, I must leave you, and you must leave me.'

"On a subsequent day, as I sat alone with him, he told me that his arrangements for death were now nearly completed; and talked with me about destroying his useless papers, and respecting the manuscripts he should leave behind, and on his private affairs in general, with a calmness and composure which almost made me forget that I was conversing with one who regarded himself as a dying man. And this cool fortitude was not an occasional effort of the mind. In this respect I invariably found him the same. His dying was his common topic; and he would dwell on it with a composedness which strikingly indicated that all was right within. And it is worthy of remark, that no favourable change

which his case might occasionally present, ever diverted him, as far as my observation went, from the great work of preparing for death. For a week before he evidently changed for death, the worst symptoms of his case so far abated as to awaken some hopes again respecting him; and he said to me one day, 'I may, it is possible I may, rally so far as to be able to advise with you again. But,' added he, looking up, while the tears glistened in his eyes, 'if not, blessed be thy name, I am resigned to thy will.'

"On my incidentally mentioning to him that his friends at a certain place had agreed to have a meeting for prayer in his behalf, he leaned forward, and covering his face with his hand, he wept, and said, 'What am I, that I should have an interest in the prayers of so many good people!' He repeatedly observed to me, during the latter part of his illness, that were he to be raised again, he believed it would be chiefly in answer to prayer; and to this cause he said he must greatly attribute it, that his sufferings were so much mitigated, and that such a worm as he should enjoy so much of the divine presence and goodness in his affliction."

The following incident, related by Mrs. Dixon, shows the perfect composure with

which he contemplated his approaching dissolution:—"One night, on my offering to wind up his watch, he handed it to me, saying, with great emphasis, 'Here, take it, and wind it up for me a few times more. I shall soon be

"Where day and night divide His works no more."

Then, clasping his hands, he exclaimed, 'Eternity! eternity!' and sinking back in his chair, seemed to be absorbed in the contemplations which that momentous word had suggested; while his brightening features, becoming impressed with the vastness of his conceptions, assumed an almost supernatural expression. I felt awed, as in the presence of one already beginning to realize the mysteries of the eternal and invisible state; and scarcely dared to move or breathe, lest I should interrupt his heavenly musings, or bring down his soul from those 'celestial heights.'"

On the 27th of December Mrs. Bulmer visited Mr. Watson for the last time. She says, "Never shall I forget the expression of his countenance, when I first met the glance of his languid and almost tearful eye. It was a look of ineffable kindness and affection; and seemed as if it could be second only to that with which I trust we shall again regard each

other in a sinless and unsuffering world. It dissolved my soul in grief. I felt assured that his stay among us could not be long, and the idea of his removal inflicted a poignant pang. His frame bore the impress of the agony he had endured. But his spirit seemed pavilioned in the very divine presence. He said he 'felt the sustaining power of God,' and discoursed for a short time, and with frequent intermissions through great debility, on that most delightful topic, peculiarly suggested by the season, 'They shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.' 'Yes,' said he, 'God with us,—with us all,—with each of us,—with us at all times,—under all circumstances; especially with us in deep sympathy with all our sorrows, dangers, and sufferings.' He was evidently giving utterance to sentiments the truth of which he was then powerfully realizing in his own experience. Faith triumphed over dissolving nature, and the Rock of ages he felt to be the strength of his failing heart;—our parting is indelibly written on mine. With a voice faltering through irrepressible emotion, he expressed a hope that our next meeting might be under more favourable circumstances, and added, 'If not,—if not,—may we have a happier meeting in heaven!'"

Speaking of his call to the ministry, to a kind neighbour who often visited him in his illness, he said, "My dear friend, God called me very early to the work of the ministry. I began to preach before I was fifteen years of age. I never had any doubt but that I was called of God. I always delighted in my work ; and I can truly say, in reference to the missions, and in some secular affairs necessarily connected with the ministerial office, I have acted as I thought for the best ; but, my dear friend, we are all liable to err ; and I doubt not that my motives have been frequently misunderstood. All secular affairs have a deadening tendency ; constantly pain-ing one's mind, and doing us injury."

At another time, in conversation with the same person, he said, "O what a state will that be, when *I*, *I* shall be singing hallelujahs to God and the Lamb ! when *I* shall be able to love him and serve him, without the possibility of sinning against him !" — laying great stress on *I*. "O," he continued, "it is sin that keeps us at such a distance from God ! What a wonderful scheme is that of redemption by Christ ! What a glorious state, when mind shall expand to take in the heights, and breadths, and depths of love divine ! to be able

to enter largely into the mysterious wonders of Providence, without this clog of corruption. *I shall see God ; I, I, individually, I myself, a poor worm of the earth, shall see God ! How shall I sufficiently praise him !*"

Making inquiries concerning a person who was immersed in the world, and absorbed in its pursuits, he exclaimed, "What a pity ! living for this world only ! Poor man ! how I pity him ! The world can give no solid satisfaction ; and then to have no hope of heaven ; no satisfactory resting place, or place of enjoyment suited to its capacities, for the immortal spirit ! How dreadful ! O how thankful ought we to be for better hopes, and brighter prospects !"

To a friend who visited him on Saturday, December 29, he said, "I am very ill ; but I am where we have so often placed others,—in the hands of the Lord : he has imparted sweet consolation to me during my affliction. We have not preached cunningly devised fables. O no ! There is real, solid, substantial comfort and support in religion. I have been many times heavily afflicted, and have been often brought, so to speak, into the waters ; but I have always found the rock firm beneath. I have never been so powerfully impressed with a sense of my own worthlessness as

during this illness; and, in the prospect of approaching the majesty of God, my feeling is that of a worm crawling into the brightness of the sun. I feel as if about to take my place near some glorious throne; but I wish to creep low, and feel my own nothingness."

His favourite expression, when speaking of his state, was to call himself a worm. One night, moved by a sudden impulse, as he lay in bed, he exclaimed, with tears flowing down his languid countenance, "I am a worm, a poor vile worm, not worthy to lift up its head. But then," he added, "the worm is permitted to crawl out of the earth into the garden of the Lord, and there, among the flowers and fruits, to speculate, if it can, on the palace and ivory throne of Solomon.

‘I shall behold his face,
I shall his power adore,
And sing the wonders of his grace
For evermore.’”

It was remarked, "No doubt, you will see his face." "Yes," he rejoined, "there is doubt of every thing but the great, deep, infinite mercy of God,—that is sure."

The morning of Sunday, December 30, the last sabbath of his life but one, and the very last on which he could sit up and converse,

was a precious season to him. "As I sat alone with him," says Mr. Beecham, "I made an observation respecting the sabbath, on which he exclaimed, 'Blessed day of rest!' and then dwelt on the hallowed enjoyments of the sabbath, and its rich provision for the spiritual wants of man. After we had spent some time in prayer, during which the divine goodness appeared to overshadow us in an indescribable manner, I, on parting, said to him, 'May the Lord of the sabbath be with you!'—to which he responded with deep fervour, 'Amen, Amen!' He had a high sense of the importance of the sabbatic institution, for advancing the cause of religion; and has more than once said to me, with great feeling, when I have called upon him on the Lord's day, and found him unable to stir out, 'Another blessed sabbath must, in regard of public worship, be a blank to me.'"

"On this day," observes Mrs. Dixon, "my beloved father became much worse, and seemed fully conscious that his end was not far distant. While I was supporting his head, he looked at me for some moments, with intense affection, and said, in a very solemn and emphatic tone, 'May the blessings of the upper and the nether springs be yours for ever!'

This was his parting benediction ; and from that time he said but little connectedly."

"On the last day upon which he was able to discourse at length," says Mr. Beecham, "I sat with him a considerable time, and had full proof that he remained in the same elevated and heavenly frame of mind which he had manifested throughout his affliction. Such dignity, united with such deep humility ; such intellectual strength and vigour, attended with so much child-like simplicity ; such patience under intense suffering ; and in the intervals of pain, such indications of ineffable intercourse with God, and such outbeamings of hallowed joy,—have been but rarely witnessed, I conceive, in any dying saint."

A few days before his death, having remained a long time in a state of lethargy, an organ struck up a sweet and plaintive psalm tune under the window. This roused him ; and opening his eyes, he feebly said, "O how sweet ! All ought to be harmony on earth ; every thing should praise the Lord : it would be so were it not for sin ; and in heaven this will be the case, where sin has no existence."

At one time, being in great pain, he exclaimed, "O how much labour and pain it costs to unroof this house ; to take down this

tabernacle and tent, and to set the spirit free ! And when shall my soul leave this tenement of clay ! I long to quit this little abode, gain the wide expanse of the skies, rise to nobler joys, and see God." He then repeated his favourite stanza :—

"I shall behold his face,
I shall his power adore,
And sing the wonders of his grace
For evermore."

In a state of high ecstasy, he burst forth but a short time before he was deprived of the power of connected speech, exclaiming, "We shall see strange sights some day ; not different, however, from what we might realize by faith. But it is not this, not the glitter and glory, not the diamond and topaz, no, it is God ; he is all and in all !"

During three or four of the last days of his life, Mr. Watson sunk into a state of lethargy, appearing almost insensible to those around him, and was nearly incapable of the use of speech. No conversation could be held with him on any subject ; but at intervals he seemed to be engaged in devotional exercises. His fears of agony and struggle in his last moments were not realized. His prayers, and those of thousands in his behalf, were in this respect mercifully answered. When, after

many hours of difficult respiration, the moment of his dissolution approached, his sanctified and happy spirit, without any apparent pain or convulsive struggle, left its tabernacle of clay, and entered the world of rest and love.

Such was the calm and peaceful manner in which this devoted servant of God closed a life of laborious zeal and usefulness, and, for many years, of almost uninterrupted afflictions. He died at ten minutes past eight o'clock, on Tuesday evening, January 8, 1833, aged fifty-one years, ten months, and seventeen days.*

The distressing intelligence of his death, which was communicated to the Wesleyan circuits throughout the country by a letter from Mr. Beecham, the only surviving missionary secretary, seemed to spread a gloom over the whole connection. The sensation

* The subjoined brief description of the *post mortem* examination has been furnished by James Hunter, Esq. :

“On making an examination after death, the gall bladder and adjoining portion of the liver were found adhering to the neighbouring viscera. The gall duct was completely obliterated, a case of very rare occurrence ; the gall bladder was much altered in structure ; and contained, instead of bile, a clear fluid like water. The changes in the liver, gall bladder, and ducts, were evidently of long standing ; and were sufficient to account for the distressing symptoms under which Mr. Watson had been labouring for years.”

excited resembled that which is felt by an army in battle when "a standard bearer fainteth."

Mr. Watson's funeral took place at twelve o'clock on Tuesday, January 15. His remains were accompanied to their final resting place by a vast concourse of people, who attended to pay the last mark of respect to this distinguished minister of Christ. When the procession reached the City-Road chapel, where listening multitudes had so often attended his powerful ministry, that building was crowded to excess, and every one present appeared to feel the awful solemnity of the occasion. He was interred in the burying-ground behind the chapel, in which repose the ashes of many of the pious and distinguished dead. His tomb is near that of Mr. John Wesley; and not far distant are those of Benson, Clarke, Bradburn, Olivers, and Griffith; ministers who were "famous in their generation, and men of renown."

"A glorious voice hath ceased! The funeral chant
Breathe reverently. Let it be wild and sad,—
A more Æolian, melancholy tone
Than ever wail'd o'er bright things perishing —
For that is passing from the darken'd land
Which the green summer will not bring us back,
Though all its leaves return."

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Watson's personal appearance—Mental character—Attainments as a scholar and a theologian—Manner of conducting public worship—Character of his ministry—Qualifications as missionary secretary—Attachment to Methodism—Catholic spirit—Indefatigable diligence—Unfinished manuscripts—Exposition of New Testament—His humility and self-diffidence—Disinterestedness and generosity—Kindness of spirit—Conversational talents—Fervent piety—Sanctified afflictions—Conclusion.

HAVING traced the leading events of Mr. Watson's life, witnessed his triumphant departure, and followed his remains to their "long home," we will now close our narrative with some general observations on his personal appearance, character, ministry, and writings.

In person, he was tall and slender: his stature, as has already been observed, was six feet two inches. His physiognomy was very striking,—expressive of intellectual greatness, decision of character, and strong affection. His face was long and thin; his eyes were a dark brown, bright and piercing; his forehead was broad, and remarkably lofty. His whole appearance showed the man of talent. Every feature was impressed with deep thought. In the earlier part of his life his countenance indicated great liveliness, but in his later years, intense study and care, with almost incessant

disease and pain, impressed upon it an air of sadness and languor.

His intellectual powers were of the highest order ; but he was distinguished not so much by the overpowering energy of any one faculty, as by the assemblage of all that constitutes true greatness. He united the fancy of a poet with a sound, discriminating judgment, a habit of minute investigation, and of calm and philosophic thought. There are in his works specimens of profound and original reasoning on theological and moral subjects, which would reflect credit upon the greatest divines and metaphysicians ; and there are other passages which, for sublimity of conception and beauty of illustration, would have an advantageous comparison with the most admired compositions in the English tongue.

Although he made no pretensions to profound classical learning, yet his attainments as a scholar were very considerable. With the powers of his own language he was well acquainted ; and few men could express their sentiments on any subject with greater elegance and force. He had some knowledge of Italian ; he read French with fluency and ease ; was well versed in Latin and Greek, and had made some proficiency in Hebrew.

His reading was immense ; and his acquaintance with the best English authors accurate and extensive. He had also successfully studied various branches of science, particularly optics, botany, astronomy, chemistry, logic, metaphysics, and the principles of government.

But it was as a theologian that he chiefly excelled. He studied the Bible with deep attention and profound interest ; and no man was better qualified to appreciate and relish its hallowed beauties, both of language and sentiment, and to estimate the nature and importance of its doctrines. His convictions of the divine authority of the sacred volume were deep and solemn. During his last illness, before the hope of recovery was finally abandoned, he observed to a friend, "If I live to enter a pulpit again, O how I will endeavour to preach ! and my first text shall be, '*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*'" His views of revealed truth were original, profound, and comprehensive ; and in the solution of theological difficulties, and the exhibition of Christian doctrine in its native purity, perhaps he was never surpassed. There was nothing *speculative* in his theology. "He walked in the beaten path of the church, and bent all his

forces to the establishment of received truths ; accounting it greater glory to confirm an ancient verity than to devise a new opinion."

In the pulpit Mr. Watson appeared to the greatest advantage. The manner in which he recited the hymns was very striking, and remarkably impressive. The Wesleyan hymn-book was never made to speak with happier effect than when in his hands. The repetition of a single stanza has often produced a visible effect upon a large assembly, at once repressing every appearance of inattention, and producing a feeling of solemnity and awe ; while the devout part of his hearers frequently wondered how it was that they had never before seen the full beauty and force of the hymns which they had long been accustomed to sing.

His prayers were characterized by great variety of sentiment and language, deep seriousness, strong expressions of penitence and humiliation, and a distinct recognition of the mediation of Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost. They were also distinguished for the earnestness and pleading importunity with which they were uttered. At times the "spirit of interceding grace" seemed to rest upon him to such a degree, that it appeared as though to him the veil were withdrawn, and that he

was permitted to enter into the "holiest of all," while the congregation were praying without. As the deep tones of his voice, tremulous with emotion, fell on the ear, the worshippers felt that their minister had communion with God, and was laying their offerings at the very footstool of the throne.

The great object of his ministry was to do good to the souls of men. He appeared in the pulpit as though he had to do the work of God in the presence of God. There was no attempt at *display* in his preaching. Though he often employed rich and brilliant imagery, yet it was never introduced merely for the sake of ornament. Every thing that he said was clearly designed either for illustrating the truth, or deepening its impression on the heart. It was not Hezekiah opening his treasure-house for the exhibition of his own riches, but Solomon bringing the vessels of gold and silver into the house of the Lord, and consecrating them to the service of the sanctuary.

His pulpit addresses were distinguished by a commanding eloquence, an intimate acquaintance with the doctrines he inculcated, and with the whole tenor of the sacred writings from which they derived their support. His knowledge of Christian theology was so deep and

extensive, that even when he dwelt upon the first principles of religion an air of novelty appeared to be thrown over his discourses. Often did he pour forth the stores of his mighty and well-furnished intellect, so that he appeared to his hearers scarcely an inhabitant of this world. The celebrated Robert Hall, speaking on one occasion of Mr. Watson's preaching, observed, "He soars into regions of thought which no genius but his own can penetrate." The vigour of his imagination was unbounded; he could rise to the loftiest heights apparently without an effort; and yet this faculty was so completely under the control of a severe and discriminating judgment, that the most fastidious critic might attend his ministry for years without being able to detect the slightest violations of just taste in the metaphors which he introduced. But the greatest charm of his preaching was its richness in evangelical truth and devotional feeling; and in these admirable qualities,—the soul of all good preaching,—it increased to the last.

His voice, which was clear and distinct, and deep, though not loud, possessed a peculiar pathos and solemnity, and was singularly suited to the prevailing tone of his discourses. His style was pure, perspicuous, and elevated;

never turgid and declamatory. His action was calm, appropriate, and dignified; in keeping with the cast of his mind, the magnificence of his subjects, and the hallowed nature of his office as a minister of Jesus Christ.

During the latter years of his life his sermons were less adorned with metaphor than they were wont to be at an earlier period. "He put forth," remarks one of his colleagues, "less of the blossom, and more of the fruit." If, in consequence of this, his discourses seemed to be less attractive than formerly, they were, on the other hand, more richly imbued with evangelical truth, entered more fully into the deep things of God, and were, it is believed, rendered more extensively useful.

In the early part of his ministry he was not accustomed to write largely with reference to the pulpit. His discourses were well studied and arranged in his own mind; but he seldom committed to paper more than a very concise outline of them, and often nothing at all. At a later period, however, he was accustomed to write a copious summary of each sermon before its delivery; and those which he preached on public occasions were generally written at full length.

Of Mr. Watson as a Christian pastor suffi-

cient has been said in other parts of this work to render any further remarks necessary.

For the office of missionary secretary perhaps no man was better qualified than Mr. Watson. His high sense of justice and honour rendered him cautious in the appropriation of public money; and his affection for the missionaries secured from him prompt attention to their wants. He was thoroughly acquainted with the peculiarities of every station under the care of the society; and his letters of advice and encouragement to the missionaries were marked by fidelity, wisdom, and kindness. His respect for the missionaries was strong and cordial; and he greatly honoured them for their work's sake. Their self-denial, heroic piety and zeal, excited his admiration; their discouragements and privations awakened his sympathy; and daily did he, in the most feeling manner, invoke blessings upon the head of the missionary, and upon "the crown of the head of the man" who, to save souls from death, was "separated from his brethren," and exposed to the discomforts and dangers of a foreign, and perhaps barbarous, land.

In the missionary cause he occupied himself with a zeal and devotedness of spirit, and a degree of general acceptance and success,

which will rarely be equalled,—never excelled. The growing prosperity of the missions was to him a ground of holy joy and triumph. He lived to see the income of the society raised from \$33,500 to upward of \$237,000 ; and the number of missionaries from sixty to more than two hundred, exclusive of catechists and subordinate teachers ; while the members of society under their pastoral care had increased from fifteen thousand to nearly three times that number. To this glorious result Mr. Watson's labours, perhaps, more than those of any other person, mainly contributed.

Mr. Watson's attachment to Wesleyan Methodism was strong and decided. His days and nights were devoted to its interests ; and he never seemed to think that he had done enough for the people among whom he had found the "pearl of great price," and whom, above all others, he esteemed and loved. Whenever Methodism was assailed, or the character of its founder misrepresented, he appeared as the unflinching advocate of both ; and whatever reputation he possessed as a man of talent and genius, he willingly employed in the service of his brethren, and the cause which they had espoused. With the whole system of Methodism,—its doctrines, discipline, laws, and insti-

tutions,—no one was better acquainted ; and in the deliberations of conference no voice was heard with greater attention—no judgment was more implicitly relied on.

But while he was thus cordially attached to his own people, he was, at the same time, eminently free from any thing like a narrow, sectarian feeling. In every spiritual worshipper of God he recognised a friend and a brother ; and he delighted to show his love to other denominations by occasionally occupying their pulpits. He repeatedly preached in some of the Baptist and Congregational chapels in London and its neighbourhood, and particularly for his friend, Dr. Henry F. Burder, of Hackney, a man of kindred spirit.

Another trait in his character was his indefatigable industry. He was one of the most striking examples of Christian diligence the world has ever seen. He was never unemployed, and he was never employed in a trifling manner. He appeared ever to act on his own sentiment, that “intellectual uselessness is sin.” His very relaxations and recreations, if such they might be called, were instructive both to himself and others. A walk in a field or garden with him was a kind of lecture on some branch of natural philosophy ; and he

never seemed to be in his element but when gathering or communicating instruction.

His labours and usefulness during the last twenty years of his life, especially when viewed in connection with the state of suffering in which much of that time was spent, have, perhaps, no parallel in modern times. His duties as a travelling preacher were numerous and urgent; and those of his missionary secretaryship, with his frequent calls to deliver occasional sermons and addresses in all parts of the country, were such as often to leave him scarcely any time at his own disposal. Had he attended to these alone he might have been held up as a pattern of ministerial fidelity and diligence. But, besides performing all these, he published many important works, by which "he, being dead, yet speaketh," and will continue to speak to generations yet unborn.

It may give some idea of his activity to survey his labours for the last three years of his life, when he was stationed at the City Road; and they are merely a specimen of his regular and accustomed exertions. During this period he was in a state of almost constant affliction; and through pain and disease presented almost the appearance of a living skeleton; yet he discharged with efficiency the duties of super-

intendent of the circuit, and exercised his regular ministry, except when disabled by sickness. He attended the numerous meetings of the missionary and book committees, and spent much time in deliberating with the other secretaries on the affairs of the missions: he wrote his *Conversations for the Young*, and his *Life of Wesley*; he arranged the matter of his *Theological and Biblical Dictionary*, composed many of its articles, and superintended the printing of the whole; and he also wrote his admirable *Exposition of St. Matthew's Gospel*. Not satisfied with these efforts, he meditated an *Exposition of the Old Testament* when he had finished the *New*; and he had entered upon a *Life of Mr. Charles Wesley*, which he intended to pursue as a sort of relaxation from severer studies.

Such were the labours of a dying man. Had he laboured less he might have lived longer; but

‘He scorn’d his feeble flesh to spare,
Regardless of its swift decline;
His labour this, his only care,
To spread the righteousness divine.”

His heart was in his work; and he “counted not his life dear unto himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry

that he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." "In the midst of life," says Mr. Montgomery, "he consumed away, like incense upon the altar, burning bright, and diffusing fragrance, till not a residue can be seen."

In addition to the works which he had published, Mr. Watson had by him at the time of his last illness a large quantity of unfinished manuscripts; but when he had given up all hope of recovery, having neither time nor strength to arrange and correct his papers, he committed nearly the whole of them to the flames, except his Exposition, his sermons, and some of the speeches which he had prepared for public occasions. Among other valuable documents which were consumed on the occasion, two are particularly remembered, by some of his friends, as possessing a deep interest. These were an elaborate Dissertation on the Salvability of the Heathen, which he wrote when stationed in Hull; and an Introduction to a History of Missions. For many years he had cherished the design of writing such a history; and the somewhat long Introduction which he had prepared, shows the earnest attention which he had directed to the subject, though his official engagements prevented his

making any progress in the work. The Wesleyan Book Committee purchased the papers which were spared; and the Exposition was immediately put to press, according to Mr. Watson's intention. It is unquestionably one of the finest specimens of that species of composition in the English language. Without any of the parade of learning, it contains substantially all the light that classical and Jewish literature have thrown upon those parts of the sacred writings which he professes to explain, especially upon the gospel of Matthew. "His qualifications for interpreting Scripture were of the first rank. Calm, judicious, extensively read, possessing sound learning, he had, at the same time, a clear insight into the mind of the Spirit, and an intimate acquaintance with the phraseology, idiom, and general principles of interpretation of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures."*

Self-diffidence invariably attends real intellectual greatness and true piety. Hence, adorned as Mr. Watson's character was with such an unusual combination of literary, religious, and moral excellences,—conscious as he must have been of the value attached to his literary pro-

* London Evangelical Magazine;—a periodical published under the patronage of the Congregationalists.

ductions,—of his popularity as a preacher,—of the deference with which his opinions and advice were regarded,—he possessed unfeigned humility of spirit; and among that rich constellation of virtues that adorned his character, this grace shone with pre-eminent lustre, and diffused a brighter radiance over all the rest. While he was followed by the applause of the wise and the good, he laid all his honours at the foot of the cross, and spoke of himself in language of deep self-condemnation.

His disinterestedness and generosity were as remarkable as his other qualities. He merged his own personal interests in the lofty view which he took of what he believed to be his duty to God and the church. It was a maxim with him, that a Christian minister ought not to hoard up any of the property which may be given him by the church for his maintenance. If any thing remain when his own wants and those of his family are met, he thought it should be applied to the relief of the poor and the advancement of religion. In his own practice he even went beyond this. He gave his literary productions, with but one exception, to the church; so that the pecuniary advantages arising from the sale of them should be applied to the promotion of the kingdom of Christ. He was not rich;—

he had an undoubted claim to compensation for his labours ;—he was sometimes urged to accept it ; but, animated by the same elevated feeling that prompted Elisha to refuse the grateful offering of the renovated Naaman, he rejected every offer of the kind. His liberality to the poor and indigent knew no limit but an empty purse ; and he often subjected himself to straits and inconveniences to relieve the wants of others.

To those who knew him only as a public man, he appeared to be somewhat cold and repulsive in his manners. Such, however, was not the case. No person would indeed at any time have presumed to attempt any undue familiarity with him. There was that in his very countenance which commanded the respect and veneration of all who approached him ; but it was not possible to be long in his society without perceiving the cordiality of his feeling, and the benevolence of his temper. By his friends he was greatly and deservedly beloved for his habitual benignity both in spirit and in conduct. Those who applied to him for favours found him “easy to be entreated.” When requested to preach occasional sermons, he rarely refused, if it was in his power to comply ; and the readiness with which he consented greatly enhanced the value of his services.

It is true that in the latter years of his life, his severe and almost uninterrupted sufferings excited an influence upon his spirits, and at times made him seem austere, and almost uncourteous to those who would, for frivolous objects, have intruded on his hours of study or business. And, perhaps, while he very properly denied his society to mere idlers, he did not *always* feel, in this, and a few other respects, so strongly as might have been desired, how much is reasonably due to the claims and sensibilities of tried and faithful friendship. All these infirmities, however, were but as spots on the sun's surface; and they were of rare and transient occurrence.

Until his afflictions had seriously affected his spirits he was eminently social and communicative; and to the end of his life he greatly enjoyed the company of pious and intelligent persons. In his intercourse with his friends, and his moments of relaxation from severer pursuits, he was often playful as a child, and would relate anecdotes, of which he possessed a great variety, with admirable effect and native humour. Yet he never indulged in unbecoming levity, or lost sight of the respect due to his office and character as a minister of Christ. His conversational powers were very

great ; and he was ever ready to impart to others those treasures with which his own mind was so richly stored. Whenever he appeared in the social circle he was gladly hailed as the star of the ascendant ; and his friends, on retiring from his society, would often remark, “ Mr. Watson never disappoints us ; his conversation is always interesting, and always new.”

In the various domestic relations he was entitled to high commendation. He did indeed “ honour his father and mother,” not only by every mark of filial affection and respect, but by affording them assistance under the pressure of age and adverse circumstances. Often did he deny himself that he might be the better able to promote their comfort. His surviving family speak of him as one of the kindest of husbands and parents, whose constant solicitude it was to meet their wishes as far as lay in his power ; and no sacrifice did he deem too great in his endeavours to make them happy.

His greatest praise was his deep and fervent piety. He evidently spent much time in secret prayer, and in holy converse with God ; and he diligently searched the Scriptures, not merely to find matter for the pulpit and the press, but with reference to the regulation of his own heart and life. He was not accustomed to

speak much of his personal religious attainments in the presence of others. His piety was imbodied in his habits and actions, rather than proclaimed by his lips. It was manifested by his devotional spirit, his conscientious redemption of time, his kindness of temper, and his anxiety to promote the happiness and religious improvement of all around him. In his social visits, while he strove to make his company interesting and instructive, he always directed attention to the things of God; and his devotional exercises on these occasions were marked by peculiar sanctity and sweetness.

He lived under a strong impression of eternal realities, and was elevated far above the sphere of mere earthly and sensual delights. "His thoughts," observes an intimate friend, "were much in heaven. He had acquired very endearing and exalted views of the happiness into which the righteous enter immediately after their deliverance from the burden of the flesh. He highly estimated the recompense as well as the repose of their final state; and, under these impressions and hopes, kept an habitual watch over his motives and affections, labouring, that whether present or absent he might be accepted of God."

He was a remarkable instance of sanctified

affliction. For many years his personal sufferings were great, and he seemed to be suspended over the gulf of eternity by a single thread. The frequent interruption of his labours and projects exercised his submission to the divine will, till his "soul was as a weaned child," and even the desire of life for the purpose of usefulness became extinct. The prayer which he had often uttered was fully answered :—

" With me in the fire remain,
Till like burnish'd gold I shine ;
Meet, through consecrated pain,
To see the face divine."

When he had "fulfilled as a hireling his day," and finished the work which was given him to do, the Master said, "It is enough ;—come up higher." His waiting spirit heard the joyful summons ; and, gladly quitting all below, winged its triumphant flight to the mansions of eternal bliss ; there to join with the "great multitude which no man can number," in ascribing "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

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